

COMMUNITY



GROUPS

Following Jesus together as we connect,
communicate and care.



Christ the King
Anacortes

Community Group Facilitator Handbook

Welcome to Community Group Leadership

Thank you for joining us in the work of discipleship and spiritual formation at Christ the King Anacortes by leading a community group. We have many different types of groups, and each does things a little differently. What we share in common is this: a commitment to do life together, follow Jesus together, and be on mission together in our community and in the world through this ministry of Christ the King.

As a community group leader at CTK, we believe it is vital that you feel supported in your service to your members, that you have the resources you need to lead well, and that there is help available when questions and challenges arise. Included in this packet is some practical information to get you started, but please know that we are only a phone call or email away. We look forward to doing this work with you.

One thing we don't want you to forget: you are not alone. While you (and your co-leader, if you have one) might be on your own in facilitating your particular group, you are part of a team. Thank you for joining us in creating a spiritual home for the people of Christ the King.

Vision for Community Groups

We routinely gather in community groups at CTK for the purpose of experiencing the presence of Christ in small relational environments where we serve and know one another so that we might experience transformation and all that God has to offer.



One of them, an expert in the law, tested Him with a question: “Teacher, which commandment is the greatest in the Law?” Jesus declared, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments. - Matthew 22:35-40

A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another. - John 13:34-35

Three Main Questions

Q: What do we want people to become?

A: People growing in their relationship with Jesus Christ.

Q: What do we want people to do?

A: Pursue three vital relationships:

- relationship with God,
- other believers,
- and those who don't yet believe

Q: Where do we want people to go?

A: Into a community group!



Definition of a Community Group

A community group is simply a group of people that you intentionally do life with in a real, genuine way, talk about Jesus with, and serve alongside. Most groups meet every week or every other week for a couple of hours to share life, study Scripture, and pray.

5 Elements of a Healthy Community Group:

Sharing Life, Worship, Scripture, Prayer, & Serving/Mission

(These are in no particular order and all of them may not happen every week but we believe including these in your Community group will allow for community in Christ to be built.)



Why Community Groups?

- Community groups are where people can learn to be open to others and to Jesus in vulnerable and meaningful ways so that they can grow and be shaped by the love shared between one another.
- Community groups help to develop a Christian community, being Christ-like to one another, and sharing the fullness of His life with others, which is where transformation happens routinely.
- We want everyone at CTK to find themselves in meaningful, Christ-centered relationships. Community groups are one way we practice this.
- By modeling the life of Jesus Christ, community groups help the pastors shepherd (disciple and care for) the members of the congregation.
- When two or three come together in the name of the Lord, they have the ability to act as one for the good of themselves and others.
(Matthew 18:15-20)



Further biblical examples as a basis for community groups

- *Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ (Acts 5:42)*
- *We took you just as you were. We were never patronizing, never condescending, but we cared for you the way a mother cares for her children. We loved you dearly. Not content to just pass on the Message, we wanted to give you our hearts. And we did. (1 Thess. 2:8 MSG)*
- *They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. A sense of awe came over everyone, and the apostles performed many wonders and signs. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they shared with anyone who was in 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. (Acts 2:42-46)*
- *You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house. (Acts 20:20)*
- *Greet also the church that meets at their house (Romans 16:5)*



Characteristics of a Community Group Facilitator:

- Demonstrates a life of transformation and spiritual maturity
- Is flexible, patient, friendly, and joyful
- Consistent
- Isn't afraid of silence
- Accountable to leadership
- Truthful and trustworthy
- Surrendered follower of Jesus Christ
- Genuinely interested in the spiritual health and growth of people

1 Peter 5:2-3

Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them— not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.

Qualifications for a Community Group Leader:

- Must have a personal and growing relationship with Jesus Christ
- Must regard the Bible as the inspired Word of God and therefore authoritative
- Must be a biblical example of a godly lifestyle
- Must be a member of CTK
- Must have no agenda beyond serving to participate in the transformation work of Christ



Guidelines for Hosting and Facilitating a Community Group

- * Pray! Pray for your group. Pray for wisdom and discernment. Pray for the Holy Spirit to move in your group, speak through you, and ultimately guide your group.
- * Be consistent! Set a day and time and stick to it as much as you can because there will always be people who can't make it for one reason or another. We have found it most helpful to pick a consistent day and time and build community with those who can come, especially if the group is fairly new.
- * Set some guidelines as a group! At the beginning of a new group or to set up what you all want as a group, talk together about what you'd like as a group and why you are there.

For example: Why is everyone here? What do we want our group to look like? We want everyone to have a chance to share, if someone is overly talkative they will be aware to let the introverts speak up, we will listen to one another and not feel we need to offer advice with everything that is shared, we will seek to be honest and vulnerable, we want to be open and non-judgmental, we want to offer prayer to one another, etc.

- * Be prepared. Engage with Sunday's message and review the provided questions. If you're using a curriculum, spend enough time with the material to know it well enough to keep the conversation focused. If the conversation goes off too much, as a facilitator, help to bring it back gently with something like, "That's a really interesting thought, but let's bring it back to or let's talk about that more over coffee or at another time."



* Be hospitable. If you are the host, arrange the room in an inviting circle before people arrive. Provide food and drinks (avoid alcohol if you don't know your group well) Work out a rotation for group members to provide snacks or even meals. Food is a great unifier! Keep in mind that the church building can be used.

Community Group Q and A

When do people join Community Groups?

Every September and February/March we hope to coordinate Community Group pushes: seasons when we are actively encouraging and inviting the people of Christ the King to participate in Community Group ministries. We also allow people who are interested to join Community Groups throughout the year, should they express interest through connect cards or other communication with the church.

How do people leave Community Groups?

We encourage groups to take a break or only meet once a month during the summer. Before this break, leaders can remind their group members that summer is a transition season for Community Groups. Members can decide over the summer if they would like to continue with the group or join a new group in the fall.

How do people join Community Groups?

Most people will join CTK Community Groups in September and February/March, when we are publicly encouraging Community Group participation. We strongly encourage leaders to be looking for and inviting new people to join their group. This is the number one way that people find their way into community groups at CTK: through a personal invitation from the leader or other members. People also find community groups through the board in the lobby that provides community group leader emails and new and open groups, as well as filling out community cards or emailing mary@ctkanacortes.com.



What do groups study?

CTK Community Groups gather to do many things: groups share meals, pray together, have fun and share life together, and also to grow in their understanding of what it means to follow Jesus. Groups follow Jesus together and study scripture utilizing a variety of resources:

- **Sermon Discussion Questions:** The Sunday bulletin provides discussion questions that go along with the Sunday sermon.
- **Leader resources:** we have a page at the end of this packet full of resources for community group leaders.
- Groups also choose other great books and studies they'd like to do outside our resource library. If there is a topic you are interested in, please ask, we'll help you find what you need!
- And if you do choose something on your own, please keep us in the loop with what you're studying. It's helpful and healthy for us to know what our different community groups are studying!

How do we measure and evaluate groups?

At the end of the year, we want to send a survey to all group members, as well as all leaders. The goal of these evaluations is to gather feedback on how the year went, to learn from one another, and to find out if Community Groups are helping people grow in community, grow in their understanding of what it means to follow Jesus, and grow in their mission to the world around them.



Planning Center “Groups”

We use a database called Planning Center Groups to keep track of community groups and who is leading them. It is also a tool to facilitate online signups for groups that are accepting new people and is used to communicate with community group leaders.

New Sign Ups

When someone new signs up online (or looks at the Community Group board) they are then able to email the leader of that group. Our hope is that the leader will follow up as soon as possible, within 24-48 hours. You can send an email or a text and just introduce yourself and say hello! It opens the door for connection while the new person takes the courage to reach out and sign up.

This is a person indicating saying they want to try out the group, it is not a commitment. They may do this for several groups.

Within 48 hours of receiving the signup or email with the new member's name information:

- Leaders should reach out to the new member and let mary@ctkanacortes.com know that they have done so. Let them know any relevant details about your group, invite them to your next meeting, plan a phone conversation, and invite them to join your group through clear next steps.
- If they don't reply, DON'T GIVE UP. Ideas: try to message them again a few days later, ask if Mary can give you a phone number to call, or if anyone in your group knows them and could reach out.



- Within 7 days of contacting them, hopefully, they will be able to connect with your community group. Also, we strongly encourage you to try to set up a time just to say “hi” to them on a Sunday morning.

Resources

Basic rules to follow in order to facilitate well:

- You are a facilitator. You don’t need to teach or preach. The goal is to help create sharing and discussion by all.
- Be sensitive to God’s spirit. Keep an ear on what God might be saying or doing in the group. He may have different plans.
- Be an example of vulnerability and openness. Vulnerability begets vulnerability. You can set the tone if people are having trouble opening up.
- It’s not about you. You’re there to shepherd and serve others.
- Avoid fixing, advice-giving, and solution offering and lead others to do the same.
- Avoid interrupting and crosstalk.
- Be careful with your responses after someone shares (see next section).
- Avoid politics and theological debates!
- Embrace silence and the display of raw emotions.
- Eliminate distractions like pets, TVs, smart speakers, cell phones, etc.
- Confidentiality is key. What is shared in the group stays in the group.



Here's nine things to keep in mind to successfully facilitate a lively, life-giving discussion:

- **You are a leader/shepherd, not a teacher.** Empower others to discover the truth of Scripture for themselves by asking great questions. Don't turn your discussion time into a lecture.
- **Allow the Holy Spirit to speak** to group members through the scripture/message. While it's great for you to share your own experiences, stories, and opinions, let the scripture be the main focus.
- **Community groups are about community and spiritual growth.** As you discuss, you may be drawn into theological debates. Remember this isn't the purpose. You'll need to discuss the text and application as you work through the provided questions, but remember the goal is transformation, not simply gaining knowledge.
- **Create a safe environment for group members to share.** Don't put down group members' comments or questions. Affirm people when they share.
- To **encourage non-talkers to participate in your discussion**, call on them by name. At the same time, never force participation, which would create an unsafe environment. This tactic also works to facilitate discussion when there are overly talkative group members by making it clear who should be speaking.
- Stimulate further discussion by responding to members' contributions. You can **simply acknowledge their response (Thanks for sharing, Helen.)**, or you can ask guiding questions to clarify general or vague responses (What do you mean that you feel selfish? Can you flesh that out for us?). Be sure to respond to nonverbal communication.



- **When someone begins processing in ways that are unbiblical, respond carefully.** Instead of telling group members they're incorrect, turn it over to the group. Ask, "What do others think?" or "Does everyone agree?" You can also ask, "Do you find that in Scripture?" Be gentle in your response. It may be better to confront the issue one-on-one outside of the meeting, especially if the group member is passionate about his or her answer.
- When your discussion goes off on a tangent, acknowledge the new topic's importance, and suggest that you table the topic until later—either after the current discussion or after the meeting. Having people participate—even if their comments are off-topic—is a good thing. **Just keep steering the conversation back to the main topic.** On the other hand, sometimes tangents lead to excellent discussions. Use discernment to determine if this tangent is something that your group members need.
- Don't forget to **apply what you've learned!** Ask group members how they will live life differently because of your discussion. You can also ask group members to identify any next steps they need to take.



How to Start a Group:

- * Pray for God to guide you to the right people at the right moment.
- * Make a map of a circle of 6 to 12 people (including you and other co-leaders). Identify 2 or 3 friends in your comfort zone that would be an easy ask. Then pray about 4 people that would push you out of your comfort zone. For example, new couples, that new single person, or that person whom you see every Sunday and still don't know their name/story. Leave a seat or two open for your neighbors or marginalized people who keep their distance from the large Sunday morning gathering. This is the demographic that will definitely force you outside of your comfort zone.
- * Pursue Once you've prayed about and identified those individuals, pursue them and simply ask if they would like to be involved in a Community Group. This is the hardest part for so many of us. To give you some perspective, think back on how you were invited into a Community Group. Apply that same approach to someone you don't know.
- * Consider running your group for 6 to 8 weeks. This gives people a timeframe expectation. At the end of this timeframe, pray about where God might have you take the group. Options include *going deeper* (Keep digging in and meeting together), *going wider*, (adding a couple of new people), or *multiplying* (Consider splitting into 2 or 3 groups so that others can have the opportunity to lead and add other new faces into their group.)
- * Once you've established a group, register it with Mary so that we can post it with our other Community Groups. If you have open seats, the visibility might invite someone looking for a group to contact you.



90-minute Community Group Example Agenda:

- * Welcome/social time/meal (20 min)

Encourage punctuality amongst the group. Allow that 20 minutes to be filled with community talk, coffee & snacks, or even a meal. Be aware of other's needs/comfort (room temperature, taking coats, comfortable seating.)

- * Ice Breakers/Check-in time (10-15 min). For new groups or those needing to get to know each other, do some icebreakers! Or for groups that are more established, do a check-in: How is everyone? What celebration/struggle is on your heart? (See the icebreaker sheet for additional ideas!)

- * Simple, genuine opening prayer. (1 min.)

- * Read the scripture and the thesis statement provided in the program/app (5 min)

- * Discussion time (50-60min). Slowly work through the provided questions following the aforementioned rules and guidelines.

- * Close with prayer (5-15 min). Take prayer requests and allow others to pray. Don't volunteer others to pray until you know your group. Feel free to be the one who prays every time.



Community Group Guide Example (Borrowed from Les Olsen)

7:00 pm Meet and Greet, Food/Drink

7:15 pm Introductions/Ice Breaker

7:25 pm Opening Prayer

7:30 pm Group Discussion

Sermon - Hannah's complete devotion

1 Samuel 1

Today, Hannah's story reveals the true challenge of willingness.

The book of 1 Samuel focuses on four characters: Samuel, Saul, David, and Hannah. A poem near the start of the book reveals the book's key themes: God's opposition to the proud, exultation of the humble, faithfulness in spite of evil, and the promise of a messianic King and the willingness to give God your all.

I prayed for _____ and the Lord granted me what I asked for. So now I give _____ to the Lord.

Community Group Questions from Bulletin

1. What stood out to you in today's Scripture?

2. Describe a time when you exercised Hannah's first example of willingness. 3.

Where in your life have you been unwilling to give what God has given you? 4.

How is God challenging you/growing you through this scripture/message?

Spend time with Jesus – find the living Jesus - lay hold of Jesus.

8:30 pm Intercessory Prayers

9:00 pm Closing Next Meeting: Jan. 24, 2023



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Icebreakers and “Get to Know You” Activities!

These are really important and helpful when a group is new and getting to know each other. As we share our likes and dislikes, backgrounds and testimonies, and current life updates, we start to know one another and be known!

- Share a meal. This is so easy to come around and get to know each other. Have one person make a main easy dish like pasta and others bring side dishes.
- Ask a question and use an object to pass around the room so everyone gets a chance to share. The person with the object shares and passes it to another person until everyone has shared.
- Use one light question, one family/background question, and one current life question!
 - Sample
 - Light questions
 - What's your favorite snack?
 - What's your favorite hobby?
 - What's your favorite thing to do on your day off?
 - What do you like to do for fun?
 - Where would you travel if you could go anywhere?
 - If you could be any animal, what would you be and why?
 - Family/background questions
 - Where did you grow up? What is your family dynamic?
 - What brought you to this Community group?
 - If they know Jesus, how did they come to know Him?
 - Who are you closest to in your family and why?
 - Who is someone you look up to?
 - What's something difficult in your life that you have learned a lot from?
 - What was your experience with Jesus growing up? Close, non-existent, etc?
 - What's something you have really enjoyed in your life?
 - What is something you are proud of?



- Current life questions
 - What is something good that happened in your week and what is something that was hard or something you didn't like? (You can call these "highs and lows, roses and thorns, etc.")
 - What's something interesting that happened in your week?

Other activity ideas:

- Pass out a piece of paper and have everyone draw a map that shows their spiritual journey with Jesus up to this point (roads, bumps, stops, turns, dark areas, etc.). Give a time limit like 10 minutes so people don't overthink it too much.
- Put random objects on a table (could be from a purse or the kitchen or junk drawer) and have each person take one. They have to use that object to tell the group something about themselves or something about their week!
- Everyone can show a picture of who they consider their "family" from their phone or actual photo. Then talk about those people and who they are to you.
- After a few meetings, ask the group if they would be willing to share testimonies. Have a few people share each week. Give some time frame like 5-10 minutes and a few questions to help people think through it. For example: "What were the significant moments or people that brought you to Jesus?", "What did Jesus save you from?", "How has Jesus changed you or has continued to shape you?", "How would you describe your relationship with Jesus?", "What are some of the main ways you have seen Jesus in your life?", or "What have been hard times in your life?", etc.
- Share updates on prayer requests or life updates from the previous week.

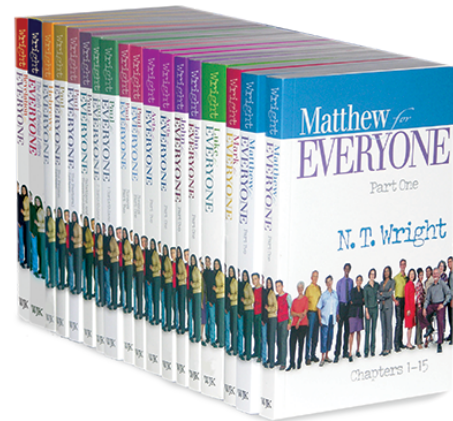


Other Community Group Study Resources

The Bible Project (Youtube or <https://bibleproject.com/>)



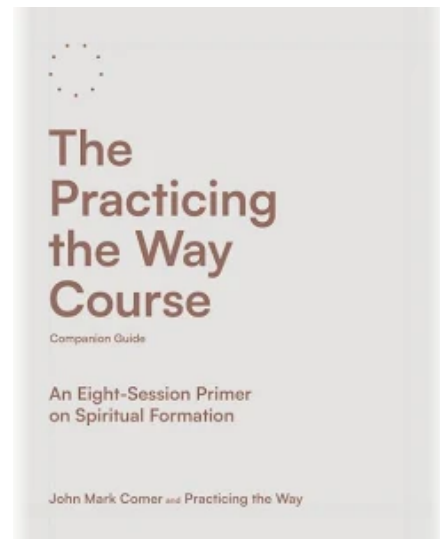
NT Wright Book Studies for Individuals and Groups



Practicing The Way Primer Course

The CTK bookshelves have lots of studies and video series available!

Lifeway Bible Studies - <https://www.lifeway.com/>



SOAP - Pick a gospel and do SOAP
(Study, Observe, Apply, Pray over a section of verses)

Please contact Mary for any Community Group questions:
mary@ctkanacortes.com



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