



**COMMUNITY GROUP
LEADER LAUNCH GUIDE**



WELCOME

Thank you for investing your time and gifts to lead a Community Group! This guide is designed to help you discern if group leadership is right for you and get you all the basics to start your group. You will find some information about the mission and essentials of Community Groups, the expectations of you as a leader, and some tools to help you get to know the members of your group and lead great discussions. Think of this as a launching pad to help you start well.

Leadership is an incredible adventure. Be bold, be encouraged, and be ready to learn along the way.

You can do this!

*“And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” - **Ephesians 4:11-13***

The Community Groups Mission

Community Groups advance the CCC mission by providing environments that develop, equip, and encourage passionate disciples of Jesus Christ that are Belonging, Growing, Serving, and Reaching.

The Essentials of Community Groups /// The basics of group life

- **Ownership:** Everyone invests in the group
- **Friendship:** Encouraging relationships
- **Care:** A safe environment of mutual support
- **Accountability:** Applied with wisdom and love
- **Bible:** Understand, believe, and apply
- **Prayer:** Earnest and impactful
- **Discipleship:** A relational community of life change
- **Leadership:** Christ Community trained and coached

The Essentials of Leadership /// What is expected of you?

GROWING SPIRITUALLY

- Exhibit Christian character
- Pursue a consistent devotional life
- Regularly worship at Christ Community Church
- Be prayerfully led by the Spirit

LEADING YOUR GROUP WELL

- Intentionally develop relationships with your group members
- Prepare for and execute group meetings (delegation is encouraged)
- Pray for group members between meetings
- Provide and coordinate pastoral and shepherding care
- Regularly evaluate your group and leadership
- Model the four marks of a disciple (see following page)

INVESTING IN YOUR OWN LEADERSHIP

- Complete the leadership application and New Leader Training before beginning group leadership
- Make yourself available to be coached and trained
- Connect to the church through membership
- Participate in Rooted within 12 months

The Four Marks of a Disciple

Belonging

to God and his family

Growing

in knowledge, love, and action

Serving

in the church and the world

Reaching

others with God's good news

The Expectations of Community Groups /// What is required?

- **Group size:** 3-12 members
- **Openness:** Every group plans to invite and welcome newcomers (the open chair)
- **Curriculum:** In a 52-week year, each group must do 8 weeks of Bible Savvy and 8 weeks of sermon-based discussion. The remainder is at the leader's discretion but must be approved by their pastor or coach and should equally balance belonging, growing, serving, and reaching as themes
- **Confidentiality:** What's shared in the group stays in the group
- **Prohibitions:** Alcohol, Communion and Baptism, solicitation of business, financial soliciting of non-Christ Community Church ministries or partners

Know, Show, Grow

Relational Discipleship In Your Community Group

Relational discipleship is the act of inviting your group members to walk with you as you walk with Jesus. This is what Paul is modeling and instructing in 1 Corinthians 11:1:

“Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.”

While the concept is pretty easy to grasp, sometimes it’s hard to imagine what this looks like practically. Know, Show, Grow distills relational discipleship down into three simple tasks. The leader who makes these steps their routine will discover a new level of effectiveness and relational connectivity as they help others mature as Christians.

Step One: “Know” /// One individual at a time

The first step for any leader is to get to know the people in your community group. Many leaders make the mistake of treating this step lightly and moving right past it, but it is actually a really important first step. How can you lead someone you don’t even know? This is more than just introducing yourself and making a mental note of their name (though names are important too!). Invest in getting to know them - their interests, their faith journey, and their story. Really knowing the people in your group does two things: First, it allows them to know that you value them as a person. Second, it helps you understand how you can lead them more effectively.

Remember, this first step is an ongoing process. As you continue to meet, make an effort to ask questions and go deeper with your group members. Invite them to share their stories, ask questions, and reflect on their takeaways. A leader who skips this step or does not treat it with the intentionality it deserves will likely feel distant from or ineffective with their group. Take the time to know each individual that God has put in your path and you’ll find your ministry to be fruitful, fulfilling and fun.

Step Two: “Show” /// One action at a time

An effective leader intentionally finds ways to show the people in their group that they care. It doesn't have to be complicated, time-consuming, or expensive - it can be as simple as a text message or phone call to follow up on an exciting event in their lives, a card or phone call of encouragement, or asking them to join you in a hobby you both enjoy. It's all about making an intentional connection outside of the typical group time to show them that you care about them as an individual. You will find that an intentional effort in this area will reap major rewards - you will feel more connected with them, they will be more comfortable sharing with you, and you will likely notice an increased commitment to the group. The extra effort is worth it!

Now that you have invested in getting to know your group members and showing them that you care about them, you can begin to work on step three.

Step Three: “Grow” /// One step at a time

You want to see the people in your group grow in their relationship with God, but how do you do that? Most of us tend to feel inadequate when it comes to the idea of discipling others. Concerns about saying or doing the wrong thing and the recognition of our own personal areas for growth can leave us paralyzed as leaders. Fortunately, it's not on our shoulders. Listen to how the Apostle Paul talks about spiritual growth in 1 Corinthians 3:7:

“So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow.”

The fact is, we can't make anything grow on our own. But God loves to produce growth in the lives of our group members through us! The key to being used by God to produce spiritual growth and fruit in a group member's life is faithfulness to God and obedience in doing the things that God instructs us to do. Scripture gives us a good idea of how God used the early church to produce growth in the lives of its members:

“They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer... And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.” (Acts 2:42 & 47b)

Your job as a leader is to engage your group members in fellowship and help **point them to their best next step**. It might be serving in a ministry, connecting them to Care Night, helping them develop a more consistent bible reading rhythm, or simply modeling Christian community. The most important thing to remember is that God makes people grow. Our job is simply to follow Jesus faithfully and share what He has given us with the people we are privileged to walk with. Growth is one step at a time. Our job as leaders is to help people take their best next step. If we are faithful to God and prayerfully aware of our group members, by God's grace we will see them grow.

A Final Word on Discipleship

There will be seasons of ministry when the soil is hard, the work is difficult and the growth is hard to observe. In those times it's tempting to just go through the motions or even to give up - but don't! Things always grow under the soil before the evidence of that growth can be seen above the soil. Remember that everyone grows at their own pace, and only God can change a person's heart. If you do your best to follow these steps, you can know you have done the important work of investing in the lives of your group members. Hear the encouraging words of the Apostle Paul in Galatians 6:9:

“Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.”

You can do this!

11

Eleven Keys to Unlocking Great Community Group Discussions

These eleven keys are principles that govern good group facilitation. Leading a good discussion is a skill just like teaching, cooking, or playing an instrument - each can be learned and developed with increasing effectiveness. Over time, these keys can be applied and mastered by anyone who desires to excel at facilitating good group discussions.

As you use these eleven keys within your group, keep in mind that they are both directive and diagnostic. That means that these eleven keys will direct you as you prepare for and plan an excellent group meeting, and, on those occasions when your group time didn't go as planned, they serve as a checklist to help you diagnose the problem and correct it in the future.

1 Create a Good Physical Atmosphere

Group leaders have to be intentional about preparing the proper space for their group.

- Form a circle where everybody has eye contact (nobody on the outside).
- Set good lighting & a comfortable temperature.
- Clear your space of distraction.
- Set your expectations regarding phones and digital devices.

2 Create a Good Spiritual Atmosphere

A good spiritual atmosphere is one that is familiar, safe, trustworthy, and spiritually focused.

- Pray! Don't forget to acknowledge God at the start of each gathering.
- Everyone's opinions, questions, and input is valued. You can disagree, but no put downs or personal attacks.
- Confidentiality is key. Nothing leaves the group. If you encounter something that puts a group member in danger, however, immediately reach out to your Coach or Pastor for guidance.

3 Establish Yourself As The Leader

Leaders lead and your group will take their cues from you to determine what is important and how the group meeting will run.

- Be prepared. You can't lead where you've never been.
- Clearly set the expectations from the beginning. Respect and courtesy are essential.

- Gently but firmly address anyone who distracts or detracts from the group environment or discussion.
- Keep the group on task when you're praying, reading, or discussing.

4. Be Aware Of Tangents

Tangents can be healthy and helpful or unhealthy and unhelpful. They often begin with a question or comment about something off topic and leave a leader wondering if this is a "God-thing" or a "goof-off thing." Here are some tips to discern the difference.

- Pray and ask God for wisdom to know the difference.
- Ask the group if this conversation is something they all want to pursue.
- If you're not sure, validate the question or concern and invite the group member to follow up one-on-one after group time. ("That's a great question/observation but I'm not sure this is the time or place to discuss it. Can we connect after group is over?")

5. The 20% Rule

Good discussion facilitators talk no more than 20% of the time. Talking more than 20% makes you more of a teacher or counselor than a facilitator. Community groups are not teaching environments; they are spaces for people to grow as disciples of Christ in fellowship and community. Some Community Group leaders may have a teaching gift, but the role of a group leader is facilitation, not teaching.

6. Silence Is Ok

Avoid the temptation to "fill in the blanks." When you ask a question and there is silence...wait it out. Here are some benefits of silence:

- When nobody is speaking, that's when the Holy Spirit does.
- That awkward silence communicates to the group that you aren't there to answer for them.
- Silence gives the quieter, more thoughtful group members the space they need to respond.

7. Be Kind & Real

Respect goes both ways. If you want your group members to engage authentically, you have to respond with kindness and a genuine interest in what they have to say. Be careful with how you react to the comments, views, or experiences of others - even if they say something that you believe to be heretical or just plain goofy. If you overreact, snap, or make someone feel dumb, you will lose that person and likely your whole group. You want your group to have honest, meaningful discussions - respect and kindness will go a long

way towards making that happen. If you do happen to make a mistake or overreact, be quick to take responsibility and apologize. A humble apology will go a long way to regain the respect and affection of a group.

8. Ask Probing/Open-Ended Questions

Quality questions show genuine interest in a person and encourage deeper, more meaningful conversation.

- Avoid yes or no questions unless there is a follow-up question like “why?”
- Ask questions that facilitate discussion, thought, and discovery. (If you need more help in this area, ask your Coach or Pastor for a copy of *How To Ask Great Questions* for helpful guidelines and ideas).

9. One-Size Doesn't Fit All

The people in your group are unique and each individual deserves a unique approach. The better you get to know your people, the easier it will become to get everyone to engage.

- Leave room for personality styles; not everyone participates in the same way.
- Avoid using blanket statements (you're all...) or applying blanket rules (Everyone must...).
- Unique opportunities or roles for group members based on their passions and spiritual gifts will help them engage more in the group. Be creative!

10. Watch Non-Verbal Cues

Communication is made up of body language (55%) and tone of voice (38%). Only 7% is actually communicated through the words we use! Here are some things to watch and listen for:

- Posture - is a group member facing the group, leaning in and listening or turned away thumbing through social media on their phone?
- Energy - is a typically engaged group member uncharacteristically quiet or a quiet person unusually loud?
- Facial Expression - lack of eye contact, crossed arms, and pursed lips may indicate discomfort or frustration.

11. Be Spiritually Prepared

Most leaders have busy lives. We recommend taking some time before you come to group to get yourself spiritually prepared for your ministry time. Pray, prepare your heart with worship, enjoy some solitude and just breathe.

God is With You

Checklist for Leading a Meeting /// What to do

BEFORE:

- Pray for the meeting and the members
- Develop an agenda
- Communicate logistics

DURING:

- Provide time for friendship and connection
- Study the bible for application
- Practice care and accountability
- Pray

AFTER:

- Evaluate the meeting
- Coordinate care (if needed)

3Gs For When Things Get Tough

Sometimes life gets tough. When something really hard happens in the life of a group member, you might feel overwhelmed or inadequate in your ability to handle it well, or you might be too quick to offer a solution. Somewhere in between the extremes of avoiding and fixing is the sweet spot for Community Group Leaders. Think of yourself like the triage section of an emergency room - your role is to listen, ask questions, and offer hope and help inside the complicated situation. Here are three simple steps (the 3Gs) for you to follow when triaging a difficult situation with someone in your group

GATHER DATA

Hear their story. Actively listen. Ask questions.

GIVE HOPE

Know some areas of hope from the bible to share (Psalm 34, John 14, Hebrews 11).

GIVE RESOURCES

Know about Care Night and who to point them to for help ccclife.org/carenight.

Your Coach is always available to help you with
care questions and resources.

More Resources



ROOTED

New to Christ? New to Christ Community?

Want to pursue leadership? **START HERE!**

rooted@ccclife.org

Community Group Leader Resources

ccclife.org/becomealeader
[/leadingagroup](#) • [/childcare reimbursement](#)

and Rightnowmedia.org



Have a bible question your group doesn't know how to answer?
Ask a pastor! Email askapastor@ccclife.org with your question
to hear from the pastoral staff at Christ Community Church.

**CHRIST COMMUNITY
CHURCH**