



community

GROUP LEADER TRAINING

COMMUNITY GROUP LEADER

TRAINING RESOURCE 101

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INTRODUCTION

Christian Centre Abbotsford has been through many phases of small group ministry over the years. We are now embarking on a new journey of rediscovering the Biblical pattern for church and ministry. We are transitioning from a Sunday morning corporate meeting based church to a Gospel-centred Kingdom Community based church to live out our mandate to make disciples of all nations.

We could call this Gospel-centred Kingdom Community, or simply, Biblical Community.

This does not mean that we will no longer meet together corporately as a church on Sunday mornings, but it means that our church will transform to function from a Biblical Community base.

In order to fully embrace this Biblical Community, it is necessary to be convinced of its foundation in Scripture. We will therefore spend time defining and explaining some of the terms used. It is important to us to be Biblically sound and clear.

The first module will cover this aspect. The second module will contain the practical and spiritual aspects of leading a community group.

BIBLICAL COMMUNITY

Why is Biblical Community important?

1. Jesus commanded us to make disciples of all nations

Biblical Community provides an **environment in which discipleship thrives**. Discipleship requires authentic relationships in the context of loving, accountable community life. It cannot take place effectively in a large public meeting or in isolation. Biblical Community is the incubator for producing disciple-making disciples of Jesus.

2. Jesus taught and modelled it

This is **the pattern Jesus showed us** to advance his kingdom and it is **how he is building his church today**.

3. God models community

God is a community; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The three persons of the Godhead work together as a team. They are three distinct persons, yet one God; a perfect picture of unity in diversity. They are co-eternal and co-equal in power, glory and substance, yet have different functions. The Triune God is one God in three persons. We too are called into unity as the Body of Christ on earth with all our diverse gifts, functions and personalities. God has given us an example to follow in his very Being. These are some aspects to take note of:

- a. The nature of Trinity is LOVE
- b. Working together in unity and harmony:
The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are always deferring to one another, always lifting the other up. Each speaks of the other more highly than himself. There is absolutely no competition or striving to be the best among them. They work together in complete harmony and unity - the perfect team! This is an example to us as the Christian community of how we ought to work together.
- c. Individuality and community:
In the Trinity we find the perfect balance of each one operating separately and the three combined. The Trinity presents a lifestyle of honouring the one and the many, without either being at the expense of the other. The God who is Father, Son and Spirit models this unity amidst diversity, and this community of equality. The church, through her relationship with the Triune God, is called to model this for the world.
- d. The importance of relationship:
"God's personhood is somehow defined as a community of persons who find their true being in relationships. In other words, it is the relationships that exist between Father, Son and Holy Spirit, just as much as the separate beings in themselves, that truly define who God really is." (Dick Tripp, Qualities of the Triune God)

4. It is a good practical model for care, growth and mission

Practically, there are many benefits in following a simple, relational community approach to church life and discipleship. We are able to genuinely care for those entrusted to us by Jesus. We are able to help them grow and mature as followers of Jesus and we are able to share our faith with others in a natural authentic way.

PROCESS QUESTION:

- i. *Does the “Sunday corporate church meeting” model help us adequately care for and disciple one another? Name some shortcomings of this model.*

How are we transitioning into a Biblical Community?

We will **teach and model** **Biblical Community life** and **equip** people to live this way and teach others to do the same.

We will **gather in homes in Community Groups**. This will form the basis and foundation of the Biblical Community (the church).

When we come together **corporately**, it will be a celebration in worship of Jesus together and to hear the preaching of the Word of God. The Community Groups will share in the serving and celebration at these gatherings.

PROCESS QUESTION:

- ii. *Does this mean we will not meet together corporately as a church on Sundays?*

What is Biblical Community?

Biblical Community is the term we are using to describe the CHURCH.

We are using the term Biblical Community as it is **easily understood and best describes what we see in the Bible**. We could have used the word “church” or “kingdom of God”, but these terms are often misleading or misunderstood.

Church is sometimes associated with religious practices and traditions that are not found in Jesus’ teachings or New Testament Scripture and could therefore be misleading.

Kingdom is often not easily understood or defined. It is sometimes viewed as an abstract concept or a spiritual state that is not readily translated into everyday life.

Biblical Community is not restricted to Community Groups, but Community Groups are a critical functioning element of the Biblical Community. Biblical Community life happens anywhere the church goes or gathers.

What is the Biblical meaning of church?

The word church is translated from the Greek word ekklēsia (pronounced: ek-klay-see'-ah), which means "Called out" ones. It is the group of people (community) called out by Jesus to represent him on the earth.

The church is the called out followers of Christ, wherever they are, deployed or gathered. In other words, **we are the church, individually and together**.

The church is the people of God, not the building where we meet or a particular meeting.

a. The church is not the building:

We are privileged to have a beautiful facility in which to meet together as his church and facilitate training, fellowship, prayer, etc. However, the building itself is not the church.

Sometimes people confuse the church building with the Old Testament concept of the temple, but God no longer lives in a building, he lives in us, his people. The Bible clearly states this.

Act 7:48 Yet the Most High does not dwell in houses made by hands...

1Co 3:16 Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?

1Co 6:19 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own,

2Co 6:16 What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, "I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

There is nothing sacred in the bricks of the church building. The sacred space is God's indwelling presence in us and when we gather together, he is also among us. (John 14:17)

We are his temple, individually and as a community, wherever we go and wherever we choose to meet.

Where did the early church meet?

The early church met predominantly in homes (Acts 2:46 house to house; 5:42 house to house; 8:3 house after house; 10:22 Cornelius' house; 12:12 Mary's house; 16:32 Jailer's house; 16:40 Lydia's house; 18:7 Titius Justus' house; 20:20 house to house; Romans 16:5

Prisca & Aquila's house; 1 Cor 16:19 Prisca & Aquila's house; Col 4:15 Nympha's house; Phil 1:2 Philemon's house).

They also gathered in larger places as well as community halls (Acts 19:9), third floor "upper rooms" (Acts 20:8), etc. Initially they met in the temple, as was their custom as Jews, but this changed as persecution arose. Paul went into the synagogues on his missionary journeys, looking for people and opportunities to share the gospel, but he also went into marketplaces and other public meeting spaces to do so. The goal was to "make disciples, baptising them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit". The "where" was wherever people were located. It seemed the church in those days met wherever they could, homes being the most convenient and natural meeting places.

The main take-away here is to recognise that God lives in you and me, and is present wherever we are and gather.

b. The church exists beyond the Sunday service:

As stated above, the church is the people of God, not a particular meeting. In order to function as the church, however, it is critically important to meet together and we are encouraged in Scripture not to miss such gatherings. However, the church exists beyond a Sunday into Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and the rest of the week. It is important to make this distinction because when you say "church", most people think of the Sunday service at the church building. Unfortunately, for some people that is where church ends for them, but this is not how it is meant to be.

When did the early church gather?

The frequency of meetings varied in the early church at various times and places. In the beginning, the disciples gathered together daily (Acts 2:46), then later we read that the church met on the first day of the week to break bread (Acts 20:7). When Paul was in Ephesus, he "reasoned daily" in the hall of Tyrannus (Acts 19:9-10). While in Rome, people came to him every day from morning till evening (Acts 28:16; 23; 30).

We ought to make time for regular meetings in homes and for gathering together as a Body.

Biblical pictures that describe the church/community:

1. A Vine

John 15:1-8

(1) "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. (2) Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. (3) Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. (4) Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. (5) I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. (6) If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. (7) If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you

wish, and it will be done for you. (8) By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.

Jesus, talking to his disciples, says: (V5) "I am the vine and you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit,"

It's interesting to note the picture Jesus is trying to show us:

- When looking at a vine, distinguishing between the vine and its branches is virtually impossible, due to the fact that **a vine is made up of its branches.**
- This is what Jesus is saying to his disciples, to them and to us. We are intertwined, like a vine and its branches; **we are not just together but are one with each other,** like Jesus and his church.

In Jesus' parable/metaphor of the vine he is showing us some important spiritual truth. The vine is him and his church, him and his followers, him and his community.

Abiding in Christ is not just talking about having a good, loving relationship with Jesus. It's also about having a good, harmonious and unified, loving relationship with his people.

Have you ever noticed that when people isolate themselves from the community of believers, they tend to "wither" like a branch that's been cut off of the vine? This is because you cannot be in Christ and separated from his people! Jesus and his church are ONE.

2. A Body

Jesus' church/community is also depicted as a body.

Romans 12:5 so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

1 Corinthians 12:12-27

(12) For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. (13) For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit. (14) For the body does not consist of one member but of many. (15) If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. (16) And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. (17) If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? (18) But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. (19) If all were a single member, where would the body be? (20) As it is, there are many parts, yet one body. (21) The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." (22) On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, (23) and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, (24) which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, (25) that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. (26) If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one

member is honored, all rejoice together. (27) Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

Here we see Paul explaining this Biblical community that is in Christ. What stands out is that Christ is ONE with his church/community and that we are all parts of a whole. **Christianity is not for individuals alone, but for individuals together!**

3. A Spiritual House

Jesus' church/community is also described as a building made up of "living stones", of which Jesus is the Chief cornerstone.

1 Peter 2:4-7

(4) As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, (5) you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. (6) For it stands in Scripture: "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame." (7) So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, "The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone," [NKJV says "chief cornerstone"]

4. A Spiritual Family

The church is also described as a spiritual family.

Eph 3:14-15

(14) For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, (15) from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named,

Those in Christ are sons and daughters of God and therefore brothers and sisters. We became part of God's global spiritual family! (John 1:12-13; Matt 12:50; 1 John 3:16; James 2:15)

A BIBLICAL COMMUNITY is a group of people who are following Jesus together!

They understand the value of the Gospel. They have experienced personal rescue through Jesus Christ and they live in the reality of this great salvation by daily walking with Christ, loving him and the people he loves.

They are growing and working out their salvation, discipling one another and actively spreading the Gospel message by practically loving people (and sharing the message of reconciliation)!

We hope to do this through meeting in Community Groups in homes and gathering as a corporate Body.

PROCESS QUESTIONS:

iii. *Biblical Community is a term to describe the Church* **TRUE / FALSE**

iv. *The church building is God's temple* **TRUE / FALSE**

NOTES:

[illegible]

THE IMPORTANCE OF DISCIPLESHIP

Why Discipleship?

Is discipleship really necessary today? Why do we need to do it?

1. Jesus commanded it

Before Jesus left, he commissioned his disciples to go out and do what he had done, so that his kingdom would multiply and reach all people and people groups. He called them and those who would follow after them, to make disciples of all nations.

Mat 28:19 Go therefore and **make disciples** of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

Mat 28:20 **teaching them to observe** all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Jesus set the pattern; then called them to do as he had done. In a nutshell, he called them to be disciples who make disciples who make disciples, in other words, to make disciple-making disciples. This is Jesus’ growth strategy for advancing his kingdom on earth.

2. Jesus modelled it

Jesus is our ultimate role model. He taught us about his kingdom and he demonstrated his kingdom. He modelled a way of living that we are to learn from and follow (adopt as our lifestyle). He gave us a very clear and simple pattern for living and advancing his kingdom.

After he was empowered by the Holy Spirit, he called twelve men as his disciples, to learn from him and follow his teachings and example.

In Hebrew culture, a teacher was someone who modelled a life for their disciples to follow, not an academic teacher in a classroom situation. In today’s context, it could be likened to an apprenticeship where the qualified artisan teaches and trains his apprentice by working alongside him. It involves understanding and the application of that knowledge in practice. We sometimes use the word mentorship to describe this.

This is what teachers would do in Israel when it came to following God. They would show and train their disciples by walking out their belief for their disciples to follow and become like them.

This is exactly what Jesus did. **He taught them and modelled a lifestyle for his disciples to follow.** He lived among them, ate with them, walked with them and showed them how to live his kingdom. He healed people in front of them, and then sent them to do the same. He was a living example for them to witness and copy.

3. It is how we grow and mature

In order to grow and mature as healthy followers of Jesus, we need people!

God has called us into his family, but he has also called us to be his witnesses to others. Our lives are to be lived among people, in our neighbourhoods and workplaces. Our love for God is to be seen in our conduct. In order for us to be effective salt and light in the world, we need to become emotionally healthy maturing followers of Jesus. This does not happen in isolation. We need other followers of Jesus around us to teach us, encourage us and correct us, for growth to take place. This is often uncomfortable and difficult, but it is necessary for us to become better people and leaders.

Jesus spent much of his time correcting his disciples. One minute he's praising Peter, the next minute he's saying "get behind me Satan".

We will need to learn how to create open loving environments that are safe spaces for people to become vulnerable with one another. We will also need to learn how to address issues in thoughtful, prayerful, reflective ways that respect and honour one another and do not cause harm or shame.

Discipleship is messy but it is the way Jesus taught us and the only way we will develop as people.

4. It is how the kingdom of God expands

Jesus's kingdom expands when we reach and disciple followers of Jesus to reach and disciple more followers of Jesus. It is a spiritual kingdom consisting of a physical family. The kingdom expands when the family expands. We see the kingdom when the people of God live it out in the world, bringing Jesus' rule into every arena of life. This is not "dominion theology", but being salt and light in the midst of a dark world. We bring the knowledge of God by displaying him in how we act and by telling people about him.

PROCESS QUESTION:

v. How are you responding to Jesus' call to make disciples of all nations?

How does discipleship work?

1. The Seed Principle:

Just as a seed becomes exactly like the tree that produces it, so disciples of Jesus become just like the Saviour they follow. Jesus was giving us an example to follow, so that we could effectively do the same as he did.

a. Understanding seed

There are many times throughout the Gospels where Jesus uses seed as a metaphor for the message of the Gospel.

A seed is a tiny dried out shell that, when it falls into soil, produces a tree, which in turn produces fruit containing more seed. We call this a “life cycle.” What the life cycle ensures is that the seed reaches its potential, which ultimately is able to produce a whole forest.

Jesus, when beginning his mission on earth, came equipped with a seed (the message of the Gospel of the kingdom of God). He understood that the seed needed soil, water and light to grow.

b. Soil is the heart

In the Book of Mark Jesus uses soil as a metaphor for people’s hearts.

Mark 4:14-15

(14) The sower sows the word. (15) And these are the ones along the path, where the word is sown: when they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown in them.

The sower sows the word ... in them.

When reading the rest of this parable, we see that many people hear the Gospel and even believe or accept it but only good soil produces fruit.

c. Water and light

For discipleship to be effective, it needs to happen in community. One person cannot be disciplined by himself. There might be an exception to the rule, but this is highly circumstantial and unlikely.

Jesus made disciples of those who followed him, in community with them and then sent them with his message to model what he had shown them. How do we know this?

When Jesus sent out his disciples, there was a pattern that we can learn from. Jesus would send his disciples wherever he was about to go with specific instructions: Go into every place and find a son of peace.

A son of peace is someone who is worthy or receptive to the Gospel.

Matthew 10:11-13

(11) And whatever town or village you enter, find out who is worthy in it and stay there until you depart. (12) As you enter the house (household), greet it. (13) And if the house (household) is worthy, let your peace come upon it, but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you.

Luke 9:4-5

(4) And whatever house (household) you enter, stay there, and from there depart. (5) And wherever they do not receive you, when you leave that town shake off the dust from your feet as a testimony against them."

Luke 10:5-11

(5) Whatever house (household) you enter, first say, 'Peace be to this house (household)!' (6) And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest upon him. But if not, it will return to you. (7) And remain in the same house (household), eating and drinking what they provide, for the laborer deserves his wages. Do not go from house to house. (8) Whenever you enter a town and they receive you, eat what is set before you. (9) Heal the sick in it and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' (10) But whenever you enter a town and they do not receive you, go into its streets and say, (11) 'Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet we wipe off against you. Nevertheless know this that the kingdom of God has come near.'

Why a son of peace? The reason is this: for the Gospel to take root, it needs good soil. Once it is sown in good soil, like a seed needs water and light, the Gospel message needs a community in which to thrive. Community (relationships/people) provide vital accountability in which the seed can grow and produce fruit.

A household provides the perfect opportunity for discipleship. The disciples would settle into a household (family) once they found a man of peace. They would use that house as a base as they went out daily with the message of good news. When amongst that family, they would model what Jesus taught them and disciple them. After a while, when it was time to move on; they knew that the Gospel had taken root, because Jesus taught them the principle of the seed. They would move on and a Biblical community would be left behind to carry on the process of disciple making.

These things are not specifically recorded in these verses, but based on Jesus' teachings throughout the Gospels and the apostles teaching within the New Testament; we can be convinced that this is what took place.

We also see the example of Paul when he went to Philippi for the first time to share the Gospel. He met two significant people, Lydia and the jailer. Both of these received Christ and their entire households were baptised. From this humble beginning, the Philippian church grew into a thriving, generous, loving community.

2. Good soil

Jesus said, "The kingdom of God is like a man scattering seed on the ground."

Let's have a look at the parable that Jesus said was **key** to understanding all his teachings.

Mark 4:3-8

(3) "Listen! Behold, a sower went out to sow. (4) And as he sowed, some seed fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured it. (5) Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil, and immediately it sprang up, since it had no depth of soil. (6) And when the sun rose, it was scorched, and since it had no root, it withered away. (7) Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain. (8) And other seeds fell into good soil and produced grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold."

Jesus went on to explain this parable to his disciples:

Mar 4:13-20

(13) And he said to them, "Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables? (14) The sower sows the word. (15) And these are the ones along the **path**, where the word is sown: when they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown in them. (16) And these are the ones sown on **rocky ground**: the ones who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy. (17) And they have no root in themselves, but endure for a while; then, when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately they fall away. (18) And others are the ones sown among **thorns**. They are those who hear the word, (19) but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. (20) But those that were sown on the **good soil** are the ones who hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold."

According to Jesus there is only one kind of person that produces fruit in various degrees...

Mark 4:20 – people who accept Jesus’ teachings and live by them

These people Jesus calls **GOOD SOIL**. They hear the Word (sown IN THEM), they accept the word (believe its truth and walk in it/live by it) and produce fruit! Some produce more fruit than others, but what’s important is the fruit!

Mark 4:21-23

(21) And he said to them, "Is a lamp brought in to be put under a basket, or under a bed, and not on a stand? (22) For nothing is hidden except to be made manifest; nor is anything secret except to come to light. (23) If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear."

Jesus has taught us about which kind of soil (people) produces fruit (the Kingdom of God). His intention is that we (his disciples) will understand what happens when his Word takes root in people. **When the Word takes root in someone, the Kingdom of God starts to grow in them and we will see it in their lives!** This is exactly what Jesus is saying in these verses.

Firstly, he says a lamp in a house is there to bring light, NOT BE HIDDEN!
Then, he says, even something that’s hidden WILL EVENTUALLY REVEAL ITSELF!
What is Jesus trying to teach us?

Simply this: **If the seed is in you it will show (produce the kingdom)** and if it doesn’t show itself, then whatever is there eventually will!

As disciple-makers, we should invest our lives in people who are GOOD SOIL. Where we find other types of soil, we should help get them to the place of being good soil, but we should not invest our lives in people who are not showing interest in growing in Christ. We must still love and encourage them, but rather **focus our energies on those who have receptive hearts to learn and grow, because they are the ones who will bear fruit for the kingdom of God and make other followers of Christ.**

PROCESS QUESTION:

- vi. *Why do you think Jesus said the parable of the sower sowing the seed is key to understanding all the parables?*
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What is discipleship?

1. Life on life mentorship

Discipleship is teaching and modelling the life of Christ in an authentic relationship with another person and teaching them to do likewise.

We learned about Jesus' example above. Paul was also an example of this. He lived among the people he taught, so that his life could be a model or pattern for others to see and follow and pass on to others.

Php 4:9 What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

2Ti 2:2 and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.

2. Discipleship is personal

Discipleship includes teaching and mentoring, but it is not a program. It is intensely personal. It is about sharing your life with others.

Jesus had varying levels of relationships; with the crowds, the seventy, the twelve and the three. Out of his twelve disciples, he had an “inner circle” of three, Peter, James and John. These young men got to share some very special moments and revelations with Jesus, which he did not share with the other nine e.g. the transfiguration (Mark 9:2). Look at this incident at the “last supper;” it clearly reveals his relationship with them:

Joh 13:21-26

(21) After saying these things, Jesus was troubled in his spirit, and testified, “Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me.” (22) The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he spoke. (23) One of his disciples, whom Jesus loved, was reclining at table at Jesus' side, (24) so Simon Peter motioned to him to ask Jesus of whom he was speaking. (25) So that disciple, leaning back against Jesus, said to him, “Lord, who is it?” (26) Jesus answered, “It is he to whom I will give this morsel of bread when I have dipped it.” So when he had dipped the morsel, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot.

This was something he shared with John (and Peter) that the others were not aware of. Jesus loved them all, but these three enjoyed a closer relationship with him.

Later on that evening, speaking to the eleven, he called them friends. He brought them into a new level of relationship where he revealed everything to them.

Paul's life also reveals these types of relationships. He lived among those he taught and discipled (when not in prison). He particularly poured his life into two young men, Timothy and Titus, who he referred to as his “sons”. He had close loving relationships with these young men.

He also had close loving relationships with others, including the elders of the church at Ephesus, where he had lived and worked for a few years. When he departed from them, they embraced one another with tears. It was not a clinical, professional relationship; they had formed a brotherly bond of friendship.

Act 20:36-38

(36) And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. (37) And there was much weeping on the part of all; they embraced Paul and kissed him, (38) being sorrowful most of all because of the word he had spoken, that they would not see his face again. And they accompanied him to the ship.

From the lives of Paul and Jesus, we see that discipleship relationships are real and personal. They are not meant to be impersonal “church relationships” but real friendships. We have to see the people in our church community as family and friends.

In Acts chapter 4, after Peter and John were released, after being arrested for healing a lame man in the name of Jesus, v23 records that they went to their “friends” to report what had happened to them and they prayed together. The point is that the writer, Luke, referred to their church group as their friends. May it be so among us. May we develop our relationships with one another to the point of seeing each other as family and becoming friends.

3. Whose responsibility is discipleship?

Discipleship is every disciple of Jesus’ responsibility. Church elders, pastors and community group leaders are not the only ones called to make disciples. All followers of Jesus are called to make disciples. We can all pass on what we have learned about Jesus to someone else.

We will need to know Jesus’ teachings and be actively endeavouring to practice them, with help from those around us. We can then share what we know with someone else and walk it out with them. Those who have children should be doing it with them.

Deu 6:6-7

(6) And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. (7) You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.

Every opportunity is an opportunity to disciple!

4. Who can make disciples?

You don’t need a special qualification or expert knowledge of Scripture or have your life all “together” to disciple someone else. You do need to be born again and have a relationship with Jesus and be learning his ways and endeavouring to follow him. You can share with someone else what you have learned. Be honest about your own shortcomings and journey with God.

In the Community Group, the leader is not the only disciple maker; all those who are disciples of Jesus can help one another to grow to become more like Jesus.

5. Mission is included in discipleship

Mission was included in the invitation. It was part and parcel of Jesus’ initial call to his disciples to follow him.

Matt 4:19 And he said to them, “**Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.**”

When Jesus called the disciples to follow him, it was so that he could make them “fishers of men.” These men understood this because they understood fishing. They knew when this rabbi, Jesus (the Messiah), called them that he was calling them to influence (catch or net) people.

Jesus charged us to GO into all the world and make disciples of all nations. Mission is making disciples. He gave us the pattern of discipleship which is also the primary way to do “mission.” When he sent out the seventy, he told them to go into homes and find the “man of peace”.

Act 1:8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

Mission involves “SHOW AND TELL”

We SHOW people with our lives and lifestyles what the kingdom of God looks like, demonstrating his love and kindness to people AND we TELL them the message of God’s grace and substitutionary sacrifice for them (the gospel).

Rom 10:13-15

(13) For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” (14) How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? (15) And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!”

6. Discipleship should be a priority

Discipleship is a simple concept, but it requires focus. Since it is the way Jesus showed us to advance his kingdom on earth, and he commanded us to do it, it should be a top priority activity of the church.

All of us who are followers of Christ should be making room in our lives for somebody else (a disciple, or a few disciples, according to our capacity).

PROCESS QUESTION:

vii. Give two reasons why Biblical discipleship cannot take place in a classroom setting.

NOTES:

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UNDERSTANDING THE GOSPEL AND SALVATION

Why do we need to understand the gospel?

Biblical community life revolves around Jesus and the gospel. The gospel is the way we get saved but it is also the power to live the life God has called us to.

Tim Keller describes the gospel as, “Through the person and work of Jesus Christ, God fully accomplishes salvation for us, rescuing us from judgment for sin into fellowship with him, and then restores the creation in which we can enjoy our new life together with him forever.” (“The Gospel in All Its Forms.” Leadership Journal. Spring, 2008.

Rom 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes ...

1Co 15:1-2

(1) Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, (2) and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.

We are saved by the gospel and should live by the gospel; it is for all of life. It must also be the centre of our discipleship.

“... Church leaders can use church growth principles to add people to the church; however, only the gospel can grow people into disciples of Jesus Christ.” (Winfield Bevins, “Grow: Reproducing through Organic Discipleship, page 24).

What is the gospel?

The gospel is Jesus. It is the GOOD NEWS about Jesus - the message of his birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension and return.

Joh 3:16-18

(16) **“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.** (17) For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. (18) Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

God, in his incredible, eternal love for us (mankind), sent his one and only Son to die for our sins, to take our place and bear the punishment for all our sins, past, present and future, so that we could come into relationship with him.

Because of the disobedience of Adam, the first man, sin entered the world, and death through sin and so all mankind became separated from God.

Rom 5:12 Therefore, just as **sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men** because all sinned—

Rom 3:23 **for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,**

The GOOD NEWS is that in Jesus, God provided a sinless once-for-all sacrifice for sin.

Rom 5:8-11

(8) but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, **Christ died for us.** (9) Since, therefore, we have now been **justified by his blood**, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. (10) For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be **saved by his life.** (11) More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received **reconciliation.**

Rom 5:17-19

(17) For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness **reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.** (18) Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so **one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men.** (19) For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so **by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.**

Praise God for sending Jesus to die in our place, so that those who receive HIM can be made righteous and be reconciled to the Father!

There is NOTHING we can do to be good enough to be accepted into His kingdom without receiving Christ's sacrifice. It is only His shed blood that can wash away our sins and make us new creatures in Christ!

Eph 2:1-10

(1) And **you were dead in the trespasses and sins** (2) **in which you once walked**, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— (3) among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. (4) **But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us,** (5) **even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—** (6) and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, (7) so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. (8) For **by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,** (9) **not a result of works, so that no one may boast.** (10) For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Our good works cannot save us; they are like filthy rags before God (Isa 64:6). Only the pure, innocent, divine blood of Christ can make us righteous in the sight of God. It is a FREE GIFT, which we call GRACE.

Good works should follow conversion, but they are not what saves us; only Christ can save us.

Take note of the following:

- God loved us BEFORE Jesus died for us.
- Jesus came BECAUSE God loved (loves) us.

THE GRAND THEME OF THE BIBLE IS:

- **GOD LOVES US**
- **JESUS DEMONSTRATED IT**
- **WE MUST MAKE IT KNOWN**
- **By our words**
- **By our actions (how we live)**

(Tell people and SHOW THEM that God loves them and has forgiven them)

Everything is rooted in love and should come from love.

How do we receive salvation?

We are saved by the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ. It is all about who Jesus is and what He has done. Part of our repentance is to turn from believing that there's anything we can do to save ourselves—for everything was accomplished by Jesus Christ.

Although there is not a “formula” for receiving Jesus, the following elements should be present somewhere in the process:

There is a process of Conviction of the Spirit and Surrender to God, followed by -

- A – Acknowledgement of sin.** We need to acknowledge that we are sinners in need of a Saviour.
- B – Belief in Jesus.** We need to believe that Jesus died for our sins and rose for our justification – to make us righteous.
- C – Confession.** We need to publically confess that we have received Jesus as Saviour and Lord. This should be followed by or accompany baptism.

Rom 10:9-13

(9) because, **if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.** (10) For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. (11) For the Scripture says, “Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.” (12) For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. (13) For **“everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”**

Baptism is a very important instruction from Jesus. He commanded us to make disciples, baptise them and teach them to obey him. It helps us identify who has fully surrendered their lives to Jesus and committed to follow him.

Remember the following:

1. Salvation is initiated by God. Jesus said: “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.” (Joh 6:44)

2. Salvation is a supernatural work of the Spirit of God. The Bible describes it using words like “rebirth”, “spiritual regeneration”, “transformed” and “new creation”. These reveal a deep inward supernatural renewal of the spirit of man.
3. The Holy Spirit gives us the ability to repent, to change our hearts. He enables us to see the kingdom through the new birth, and he is the one who works in us to produce fruit, as we respond to his leading (see 5 below).
4. The result of this salvation is that the God of the universe, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, comes and lives INSIDE of you! This is a crazy, true reality! Jesus promised us these things:

Joh 14:15-17

(15) “If you love me, you will keep my commandments. (16) And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, (17) even the **Spirit of truth**, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for **he dwells with you and will be in you**.

Joh 14:23 Jesus answered him, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and **we will come to him and make our home with him**.

5. There is an ongoing “working out” of your salvation that takes place via a “partnership” between God and you.

Philippians 2:12-13

(12) Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, **work out your own salvation** with fear and trembling, (13) for it is **God who works in you**, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

Peter responded like this to the crowd at Pentecost, after preaching the gospel to them and their asking, “What shall we do?”

Act 2:38 And Peter said to them, “**Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.**”

Act 2:41 So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

Peter, now empowered by the Holy Spirit, obeyed Jesus’ final commandment to his disciples before ascending into heaven.

Mar 16:15-18

(15) And he said to them, “Go into all the world and **proclaim the gospel** to the whole creation. (16) **Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved**, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. (17) And these signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; (18) they will pick up serpents with their hands; and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover.”

Telling your story

One of the most powerful ways you can share Christ with people is by telling YOUR story. The apostle Paul repeatedly told his conversion story, in many different environments. Nobody can argue with what has actually happened in your life. Although it should be natural and Spirit led, we should spend some time considering our testimony.

A testimony gives evidence of the truth and reality of Christ through our changed lives. We should be able to share this easily with others in a simple and effective manner. Preparation and practice will help us build confidence and make it easier to share.

Preparing your testimony

Before writing out your testimony, pray and ask the Holy Spirit to guide you. When presenting it as a whole, the following is a guideline to effectively communicate it. There are three main parts to “Your Story”: your life before Christ, how you came to Christ and your life after Christ. When presenting it to a group who may not know you, also include an introduction and a closing. Obviously when you share it informally with people you won’t follow this pattern strictly. It does help, however, to have already prepared it and to have thought it through.

1. **Introduction.** Start with something that will get your hearer’s attention. Try to connect with them. You may share something funny or something personal that will help them to identify with you.
2. **Your Life Before Christ.** Paint a picture of what your life was like before you came to Christ. You don’t need to share too many graphic details about your past life. Also be careful not to glorify your past sinful lifestyle. Share only enough details to show people how completely without Christ you were. Remember, it’s not about the fact that you were bad and now you’re good, it’s that you were in darkness, but Jesus rescued you and brought you into His kingdom of light.

Questions to consider:

- What was your life like that will relate most to non-believers?
- What did your life revolve around the most? Where did you get your security or happiness from? Explain the most important activities that occupied your time, the things that were really important to you at that stage.
- If so, how did those things begin to let you down?

3. **How You Came to Christ.** Share the circumstances around your conversion; what led up to it and how it happened, as clearly as possible. In doing this try to include information that will help your hearers understand what salvation is all about, so that they know that a relationship with God is available to them also. For instance, the truth that Jesus died for the sins of all of mankind and that all can be forgiven and come into a relationship with God through Christ. Make sure to emphasise that Jesus rescued YOU, not that you “found Him”. He must always get the glory!

Questions to consider:

- When was the first time you heard or experienced the gospel?

- What were your initial reactions?
 - When did your attitude begin to turn around? What was it that changed your mind or started your journey towards God?
 - What were the final struggles that went through your mind just before you accepted Christ?
 - Were there any sacrifices you had to make and what were they?
 - Why did you finally accept Christ?
4. **Your Life After Christ.** Share how your life has changed since receiving Christ as Saviour and Lord. You do not need to paint a perfect picture, but emphasise your relationship with God. The sought for outcome should not be worldly success, but a life with God that increasingly comes to know Him and reflect His attitudes and desires. Again, acknowledge the work of His grace alone in anything good that has happened in your life.

Questions to consider:

- What are some specific changes that have taken place in your life and how did they come about?
 - How is your life motivated differently now? (What do you live for now?)
5. **Closing.** Close out in a way that will invite them into a relationship with God. Preferably point them to someone they can talk to afterwards about following Christ. We want to connect them with someone who will be able to get to know them and help them on their journey with Jesus.

HELPFUL HINTS

- Write the way you speak—make the testimony yours.
- Be truthful. People connect and identify with authenticity. They are usually drawn more to people who are honest about their weaknesses and failures than those who only speak about their successes. We have all failed at times and so it is more real.
- Don't criticize or name any church, denomination, organization, etc.
- Don't use church words ("Christianese") that non-believers will not understand.
- Consider the time frame (usually around 3 minutes, but it depends on the context).
- Practice it until it becomes natural.

HOMEWORK:

Prepare a 3 minute testimony of your salvation story, making sure to include the gospel message. Write it out and email it to info@christiancentre.co.za or video it and send it via WhatsApp to 0729864368.

NOTES:

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COMMUNITY GROUPS

What are Community Groups?

Community Groups are where we practice Biblical Community. It is where we grow together to become more like Jesus and learn how to influence and transform the world around us. We would like to model our community groups on the picture we see in the Bible.

Act 2:42-47

(42) **And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.** (43) And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. (44) And all who believed were together and had all things in common. (45) And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. (46) And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, (47) praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

Eph 4:15-16

(15) Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, (16) from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, **when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.**

Community Groups are small groups of Jesus followers who gather weekly in homes (or otherwise) to:

- Learn about following Jesus together from the Bible and help each other live out what we discover. (discipleship)
- Spend time together in fellowship, sharing meals, breaking bread and praying together, building authentic friendship relationships, reminding each other of the gospel and helping one another walk in the light.
- Build one another up in love, serving one another with our gifts.
- Support one another in practical ways when needs arise, or seek help outside of the group.
- Share Jesus' message with others and invite them to be part of the Jesus community.

Walking in the light: (Read 1 John 1:5-9)

Walking in the light means we have fellowship with one another (verse 7) and we are being washed by Jesus blood. How? By having **open, accountable relationships** with other Christ followers and by confessing our sin to each other! (verse 9). This requires us to build trust and learn to be vulnerable with one another in a safe environment.

Walking in the light means we are being transparent with our brothers and sisters. We know that we all have sin to contend with. If we want to be free from sin we must confess it. We need to be transparent about the things we are struggling with. When we do this, we disarm the power of sin and Jesus is able to work in our lives and help us overcome sin and cleanse the conscience. See also, James 5:14-16

Stir one another up to love and good works:

Heb 10:24-25

(24) And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, (25) not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Practice the “one anothers”:

In the epistles, the apostles teach the church to love each other with what has been called the “one anothers”. Some of these are to...

- Accept one another – Romans 15:7
- Admonish one another – Colossians 3:16
- Be at peace with one another – Mark 9:50
- Be kind and compassionate to one another – Ephesians 4:32
- Be patient, bearing with one another in love – Ephesians 4:2
- Build each other up – 1 Thessalonians 5:11
- Carry each other’s burdens – Galatians 6:2
- Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another – 1 Peter 5:5
- Confess your sins to each other – Colossians 3:9
- Encourage each other – 1 Thessalonians 4:18
- Forgive each other – Ephesians 4:32
- Honor one another above yourselves – Romans 12:10
- Instruct one another – Romans 15:14
- Live in harmony with one another – Romans 12:16
- Love one another – John 13:34
- Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling – 1 Peter 4:9
- Pray for each other – James 5:16
- Serve one another in love – Galatians 5:13
- Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ – Ephesians 5:21
- Use whatever gift (you have) received to serve others – 1 Peter 4:10

This gives us a beautiful picture of the loving relationships we should be nurturing in the church and how we should be behaving towards one another. In the Community Group, we should commit to living this way together.

What is the desired outcome?

We desire the Community Groups to be incubators of growing disciples of Jesus who in turn make other disciples of Jesus. Success is seeing people grow in their relationship with Jesus and for this to be evidenced by how they live their lives and treat other people. It is for all of us to be salt and light and impact our city for Jesus’ kingdom.

PROCESS QUESTION:

viii. What is your greatest fear of living life in a Community Group, as described above?

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