





WELCOME

Whether you've been in a small group before or this is your first time, these next five weeks will set the foundation for your community group experience. This study is designed to give you the tools you need to build relationships with others and understand what it means to have a growing relationship with Jesus. And it will give you a picture of what to expect in your new community group.

A big part of this study is getting to know the people in your group, so in the next few weeks, lean in and make some new friends and memories along the way. The decision you've made to join this group may be one of the more life-changing decisions you've made. So, take a deep breath and have fun!

HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

Before each group meeting

- Read the introduction
- Answer the Discussion Questions

During each group meeting

- Go through the "Share" questions. Encourage everyone to get in on the conversation!
- Watch the video segment.
- Read the "Read" out loud.
- Discuss the "Talk" questions as a group.
- Read the "Live" section. Discuss practical ways you can take a step.

RESOURCES

www.crosspoint.tv/groupresources



WEEK 1 : STARTING

SHARE

- What is one of your favorite childhood memories? Why is that memory special?
- If you could use one word to describe your family dynamic growing up what would it be? Why?

Watch video

THINK

Way to go! You've decided to jump (or ease tentatively) into community. Regardless of your group and life experience, everyone is welcome here. Community Group is not about having all the right answers, but it is about coming together and being willing to explore and figure out what the answers may look like-together.

Life is better connected. And life change happens best when all of us are intentionally prioritizing relationships.

Over the next 5 weeks you'll get a glimpse of groups at Cross Point.

Over the next 5 weeks you'll discuss discipleship (life as a follower of Jesus), community (growing together) serving (sharing hope with others) and evangelism (telling your story of what Jesus means to you).

Did you know that God created us as relational beings? He wired us for connection. God is a relational God, and since He made us as reflections of who He is, it only makes sense that God would also design us to connect with one another.

We each come to this group with different circumstances, life experiences and personalities. Regardless of who you are and where you come from, your community group will be a place for you to work out real-life situations alongside people who will love, support and encourage you. Everyone needs someone on their team.

This study is designed to help you get to know each other, lay a foundation for your Community Group, and ultimately guide you toward experiencing purpose and community.

Purpose happens through a growing relationship with Jesus.

Community happens as healthy relationships grow because of trust and vulnerability.

We will talk about both of these things in the weeks to come.

READ

What should you expect from your group? Every group will be different because every group is made up of different types of people. No two groups will be alike.

But there are some common things you can expect each week. You will be challenged to grow in your relationship with God, and you will be encouraged to get to know the people in your group.

You will get out of group what you put into it.

Relationships take time and don't happen overnight. While some people connect with others instantly, others take weeks and even months to form lasting relationships. There is a no formula for forming friendships, and either scenario is okay and normal.

There are a few things, however, that are key to providing good Community Group experiences.

1. Be Consistent. Show up every week on time. Your leader will do their part to come prepared and to always end on time. It's important that you do your part in honoring that. It's hard to build relationships if you don't make the time to be there.

2. Keep it Real. Trust takes time. The more real you can be, the more real others will also be. This may be the only place where you don't have to pretend to be someone else. No one wants you to be anything other than who God says you are.

3. Keep it Confidential. What is said in group should stay in group. Your group needs to be a safe place for you to share your story and for others to share theirs. That's how trust is built.

4. Be Respectful. You won't agree with everyone 100% of the time. That's okay. Your Community Group must be a place where people can share their opinions and ask questions without judgment.

5. Participate. Answer the questions ahead of time, share your prayer requests, and pray for others in your group. Remember, you will get out of your group what you put in.

LIVE

God has a purpose for your life and a purpose for you as a member of this group. God often uses other people to help us grow and to challenge us in unexpected ways.

Make it your goal this week to come back with an open mind toward the people in your group and an open heart to what God might want to teach you.

It's important that you commit to these first 5 weeks of your Community Group. Give it a fair chance. Commit to getting to know the members in your group, commit to being open-minded, and commit to showing up. Doing these things creates a successful group experience for everyone.

TALK

1. Do you have any expectations for your Community Group experience?

2. What is one thing you hope to get out of this group?

3. How do you see purpose impacted by community?



WEEK 2 : GROWING

SHARE

Choose one of the following questions to answer out loud:

- What is one big decision you have made in your life? What happened?
- Talk about a season of life in which you grew a lot. What caused that season of growth?

Watch video

THINK

We all know what it's like to begin new relationships. Sometimes it can be weird or awkward as we get to know each other. Other times, things seem to click right away. But one thing most people would agree with is that we'd much rather interact with the people we connect with naturally, and we tend to avoid the weird or uncomfortable relationships.

Some people find interacting with God to be weird or uncomfortable. Whether you've grown up in the church or are just checking things out, most people can point to a time when interacting with God felt unnatural.

The reason is that God may seem distant, uninterested, or uncaring. Depending on how you grew up, you may even see God as judgmental.

Regardless of your view of God, God's view of you does not change. And God is not threatened by your thoughts, questions, doubts or concerns about Him. It is normal to have any range of emotions toward God. In fact, God wants you to be completely honest and transparent with Him.

READ

The entire Bible is a record of how God has intimately pursued a relationship with us. We were created with a plan and purpose by a loving God. Maybe that's a new thought for you...that you were created to be in relationship with Him.

The Bible is a historical record of people's personal experiences with God over the span of several thousand years. The Bible is filled with stories of God lovingly pursuing His people. God created us on purpose, for a purpose: to live in relationship with Him. But He also gave us the freedom to believe that or not. God never forces anything on us. Instead, He always allows us to make our own decisions.

The first 4 books of the New Testament are called the Gospels - Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. These 4 men recorded their personal accounts of life with Jesus. They tell some of the same stories about Jesus, each from his own individual perspective.

In Chapter 15 of Luke's account of life with Jesus, there are three different stories about something or someone who was lost: a lost sheep, a lost coin and a lost son. In this chapter, Jesus is telling three different stories for the purpose of helping people understand God's radical and relentless love toward them. This week we are going to look at the story of the lost son.

Read Luke 15:11-32

The story of the Lost Son depicts a rebellious son who asks his dad for his inheritance and then leaves home with it. The son wastes all of his money and when he realizes his need for help, he humbly goes back home. He is so desperate to come home that he's willing to give up his status as a son and live as a servant instead. Instead of greeting him with the harsh judgement the son thinks he probably deserves, his dad is so excited that he is home that he runs to his son, embraces him and throws an extravagant party to celebrate. This story of Jesus shows us that God isn't sitting on a throne in the clouds looking down on us in disapproval. God loves us intimately and personally. In fact, He could never love us more than He already does.

Jesus said that his mission was “to seek and to save the lost” (Luke 19:10). More than anything, God wants a personal relationship with us. And just like the rebellious son, when we wander off, He will patiently wait for us to return and will run to us and welcome us home when we do.

One factor in the relational equation with God is trust. We are more often willing to engage in meaningful, personal relationships with those we trust. The same is true in our relationship with God. The more we trust God, the more we will engage with Him. The more we engage with God, the more we will understand His purpose for our lives.

LIVE

It’s okay if you need some time getting to know God before deciding if you want to fully trust Him. So how do you develop trust with God? It’s similar to how we develop trust with people: transparency and time.

Transparency

In our best relationships we share all of ourselves, holding nothing back. It is a powerful moment in a relationship when you open yourself up and are fully known and fully accepted. When someone knows the worst there is to know about you and still chooses to love you in spite of it. Sometimes, we are tempted to try to keep parts of ourselves hidden from God. The good news is that God already knows everything there is to know about you, and He still loves you and wants to be in relationship with you.

It’s tempting to keep our conversations with God formal and impersonal, but you don’t need to. God wants you to just be you. He wants you to share everything with Him, to be transparent with everything in your life.

Time

You cannot have a relationship with someone without spending time with them. That’s how you get to know them. There are several ways to spend time with God. Reading the Bible, writing in a journal and prayer are just a few.

God is less concerned about how little or how much time you spend as He is concerned that you spend time. Why? Because it’s a way we get to know Him. It’s a way to build a relationship with Him.

What would it look like for you to spend time and be transparent with God?

This week, spend time with God. Set aside as little as five minutes a day or as much as you want but spend time with him.

Here are some helpful tips to get started on spending time with God:

Prayer:

Take a few minutes to pray before you start the day. It can be first thing in the morning when you wake up, while you are getting ready or on your morning commute. A prayer can be as easy as a conversation with God - like talking to a friend.

Bible Reading:

Read a devotional or verse. Some of our favorites include:

- Youversion app - a free Bible app that will send you the verse of the day <https://www.youversion.com>
- He Reads Truth / She Reads Truth - a website and app that will deliver a devotion every day to your inbox or smartphone. www.shereadstruth.com or www.hereadstruth.com

**** To read more about the Lost Sheep and Lost Coins parables, read Luke 15: 1-10**

TALK

1. Where do you find purpose in your life?
2. How comfortable do you feel being transparent with people in your life?
3. Do you think God likes you?
4. What was your view of God growing up? What are some of the factors that contributed to this view?
5. How has your view of God changed as an adult? Why do you think that’s the case?
6. Do you believe that God cares about you in a personal way? If not, what would change in your life if you really believed this?



WEEK 3 : LIVING

SHARE

- What three words would you use to describe yourself as a teenager and why?
- Finish this sentence: When I was a teenager I spent most of my time _____.

Watch video

THINK

Are there people in your life who you enjoy being around and who you feel comfortable being completely you around? People who know you well enough that you can speak without editing your thoughts? A group of friends or another couple who know you from the inside out?

What do relationships like that look like? And, are they possible?

It's interesting that on some level, most people would agree that they want those types of relationships in their lives. And yet, when we first meet someone new, there is an internal pressure to put our best foot forward and mask our "real" self. There is nothing wrong with that. After all, no one wants to make a bad first impression.

However, we tend to go to extremes to present a picture-perfect version of ourselves...the most successful career, the most well-behaved children, the newest car or ideal fitness routine. We all have a tendency to talk about the good things happening in our life. We go to Facebook or Instagram, hide behind a screen and highlight only the things that went well. No one is sharing online commentary about the fight they had with their spouse, girlfriend or boyfriend. Moms don't grab their phones to upload pictures of their kids' barely-passing report card. No one is tweeting they got fired today. Why is it so hard to be vulnerable about real life?

The truth is that nobody is perfect. Everyone is broken. And when we're honest with people, we realize that we can all relate to each other more than we may have originally thought.

In a healthy God-centered community, you are loved for who you are...your faults, imperfections...the good, the bad and the ugly. What if this Community Group became that place for you? What if this group was a safe place, and these people were "safe" people? People who know you and love you just as you are. That doesn't happen overnight, but it can happen.

READ

Authenticity can be defined as being true to oneself; representing yourself accurately, just as you are. Authenticity in relationships means that you're the same person when you are with others as when you are alone.

What makes God-centered community unique is that everyone feels the freedom to be themselves. They know they will be loved and encouraged, not judged or criticized. This type of community says, "It's okay to be who you are. We're going to walk through this together."

There are countless stories about relationships in both the Old and New Testaments. Some are stories that tell us how we should act, and others are stories that give us an idea of what not to do. Either way, there are no perfect people in the Bible (besides Jesus, of course), and therefore, we should not expect to be perfect ourselves.

God created community. When God created Adam, He knew that it wasn't good for Adam to be alone, so He created Eve. He knew life for Adam would be better with community, someone to do life with.

The New Testament uses the phrase “one another” 66 times. The Bible says to pray for one another, love one another, encourage one another, grieve with one another, speak truth to one another, give grace to one another - and the list goes on. Bottom line: we were created to do life with one another.

Jesus was perfect and gave us the perfect example of community. He had twelve disciples around Him virtually at all times. In His community, Jesus knew the good, the bad and the ugly of all of his friends. But He chose to extend grace, love, acceptance, and truth through their mess. There is no one that Jesus’ love can’t reach. He does not want anyone to stay in their mess, but walks them through it. That is the true character of Jesus.

Read Hebrews 10:24-25

This passage talks about community challenging each other and committing to one another. Authentic community is much more than just a group of people hanging out. When you invite God into your community, you commit to regularly meeting with others, encouraging each other and being accountable and honest with each other about what is going on in your lives.

True community with Jesus in it is a community that cares, is transparent, authentic, accountable, loving, inviting and REAL.

God wants us to have this type of community in our lives. This type of community doesn’t just happen overnight. It takes time. It will stretch and challenge you in many ways, but it is so worth it in the end.

It begins when you take time to get to know each other on a personal level by just hanging out together. It’s also essential to take specific time to learn more about how to have a relationship with God. Each week you will have time to do both of these things when you gather together in your Community Group.

Trust is a key ingredient if authentic community is going to take place. Trust is built with your group members as you become more and more honest with each other. We all struggle. Sometimes it takes one person sharing with appropriate transparency to make others feel comfortable opening up about what they are going through. Being vulnerable will allow you group to begin the journey of trust, transparency and authentic community with one another.

LIVE

Text another group member and share a prayer request or share it with the group...something that is personal to you. What’s weighing on your mind?

For more Scriptures about God- centered community and how to be a friend that God calls us to be read Hebrews 10:24-25 and Romans 15:5-7.

TALK

1. Do you remember your first best friend? What are some of your favorite memories with them?

2. What characteristics make up a good friend?

3. Have you ever pretended to be a different version of yourself when first meeting someone? What made you feel like you needed to do that?

4. Have you ever pre-judged someone before really getting to know them, and then realized you were wrong?

5. What does it look like for you to be the kind of person who people can trust?

6. Are there people in your life you trust being vulnerable and authentic with? What is it about them that makes you feel “safe”?

7. What would it take for you to be transparent in your community group?

8. What does a God-centered community look like to you?



WEEK 4 : SERVING

SHARE

- **For Married People:** How did you and your spouse meet?
- **Finish this statement:** My spouse makes me better by _____.
- **For Single People:** Talk about someone who has been a major influence on you. How did your relationship with that person shape or change you?
- Who is a key person in your life right now? In what area of your life is that person most influential?

Watch video

THINK

Have you ever noticed that working together builds relationships differently than meeting in a living room, having a meal or watching a movie together? This can be especially true when that activity is new to you. It causes people to get out of their comfort zones. It's the reason so many team-building activities center on working on something together which causes the participants to rely on one another - like a ropes course, team sports or an Escape Room. Isn't it true that you typically have a new appreciation for the other people on your team or in your group after completing any activity like that? Shared experiences and overcoming obstacles together can cause relationships to go further faster.

The same can be true when we serve together. There are multiple benefits to serving together. You get to know the people in your group better, you learn something about yourself and you get to invest in the lives of other people.

Jesus calls us to show love to everyone. We are to be extensions of God's love, and we get to do that as a Community Group by serving others.

READ

Read John 13:1-17

In the Gospels, we read an account of the last meal Jesus shared with His disciples. When it was time for the supper, Jesus got up and began to wash the disciples' feet. This would have been particularly alarming to the disciples, as foot washing was a job reserved for servants. However, what's even more remarkable is that not only did Jesus wash their feet and then share a meal with His disciples, but He did it knowing that one of the disciples (Judas) would betray Him, one would deny Him (Peter) and all of the disciples would desert Him.

But Jesus serves them anyway. He tells them, "I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you" (John 13:15).

The example of washing the disciples' feet is an example for us today. Jesus has taught us how to love and serve others even though they may seem undeserving. When we love and serve people unconditionally, they are more able to understand how Jesus can love them unconditionally, too.

Read Mark 10:45

Jesus lived out serving others every day and every moment of His life. And in the ultimate act of love and service, He demonstrated his love for us by dying on the cross to forgive us for our sins.

Jesus' actions speak louder than words. His whole life was about serving others.

When Jesus began washing His friends' feet, they sat in stunned silence until it was Peter's turn to have his feet washed. Peter resisted and said to Jesus, "You will never ever wash my feet!" But Jesus insisted.

He was teaching us an important lesson about humility and serving.

- Humility means no task is ever beneath us.
- Humility requires thinking of others before ourselves.
- Humility requires refocusing our thoughts from our rights and needs to the needs of others.
- Humility requires giving instead of receiving.

LIVE

Jesus' radical act of service was an invitation to all of us who follow Him. He wants us to participate in the transformation of people's lives. God will take responsibility for the transformation. We need to take responsibility to serve them.

Individually, there are ways you can love and serve those in your daily life. There are people around you every day to whom you can show Jesus' love - your co-worker, your neighbor, your friends at the gym or your child's teacher. What are some practical ways you can serve them in the coming weeks?

As a group, there are several ways you can serve together. Let serving together become a regular part of your Community Group experience.

LOCAL GOOD

Each week there are local serving opportunities listed on the Cross Point website. Browse the list and choose a way to serve locally. Go to <http://www.crosspoint.tv/do-good/local-good> to find a place for your group to serve together.

GLOBAL GOOD

God asks us to love the forgotten people by going into their communities, building relationships and advancing good. Cross Point sends teams of global mission trips all year round. You can get more information by visiting <http://www.crosspoint.tv/do-good/global-good>

SUNDAY SERVING OPPORTUNITIES

Every weekend at Cross Point there are dozens of serving opportunities. If you're not currently serving on the weekend, why not check out the variety of options and see how God might use you? Even better, team up with others from your Community Group to serve on a volunteer team together! You can get more information by visiting <http://www.crosspoint.tv/get-involved>

TALK

1. Think about a time when you were able to experience people in a new context (for example, spending time with coworkers outside of the office for the first time). Did that have an effect on the relationship or your perception of them? If so, how?

2. How do you think serving together could affect the relationships among your Community Group?

3. Why do you think God wants us, as Christ followers, to serve others?

4. What do you think prevents people from serving?

5. How do you think serving can affect how people view Christians and the church?



WEEK 5 : SHARING

SHARE

- What was your perception of God during your childhood and teen years? Who or what influenced that perception?
- Describe your current relationship with Jesus.

Watch video

THINK

Evangelism...now that's a loaded word! There's so much baggage that can come along with it, and evangelism looks so different to different people. To some it looks like a tent revival with a sweaty preacher screaming at the top of his lungs, "The time is now!" Others see evangelism as an aggressive person on the street handing you a brochure that says, "Repent."

For most of us, evangelism - that is, sharing your faith with another person - doesn't come naturally or easily. For some of us, it is downright frightening. We can't imagine trying to tell someone else about how they could become a follower of Jesus. And most of us probably don't feel qualified to "evangelize" because we don't know enough about the Bible to be able to explain everything perfectly. And yet Jesus asks his followers - all of his followers - to "go and make disciples."

What if we looked at evangelism differently? What if evangelism is simply you telling someone how you decided to follow Jesus? If it was you sharing your story of the hope you found in Jesus?

Over the past four weeks, we have learned what it is like to be in community. We've learned that Jesus set the example for us and lived in community. He not only loved his community enough to teach and care for them, but to empower them to go and share His love with others. The most loving thing we could ever do for another person is to help them discover the rich and satisfying life that Jesus offers. The grace and love of Jesus is for ALL people. Everyone's welcome because nobody's perfect and, with Jesus, anything's possible.

Throughout this study you have been sharing your personal story. Evangelism is you sharing the story of your encounter with Jesus and the hope you have found in Him as your savior.

READ

Read Mark 16:13-16

There were a lot of ideas floating around in Jesus day as to who He was. Some thought he was a partier who hung out with the wrong types of people (Matthew 11:19), and others thought he was John the Baptist or one of the prophets who had come back to life. But Jesus asked his followers directly, "But who do you say I am?" That's the heart of evangelism. Who is Jesus, and who is Jesus to you? How did you meet Him and what has He done for you?

Read John 9

Jesus restored the eyesight of a man who had been blind from birth, and when the religious leaders saw the man, they wanted to know who had healed him. When they asked the man, he told them his story: Jesus healed me. He was telling people about his encounter with Jesus and what Jesus did for him, but it wasn't until later that he decided to believe in Jesus.

This man was an "evangelist" even before he was a believer. He didn't know any scripture verses from memory., and he didn't preach a sermon. He simply told people about his encounter with Jesus. That's evangelism.

Read John 14:7

Many people believe that there are various pathways to God. Whatever you choose to believe, they say, just sincerely believe and you'll be fine. But the truth is, you can sincerely believe and be sincerely wrong. This is why evangelism is so important.

Jesus isn't one of many ways to God, He is the only way. He didn't say, "I am a way," or "a truth." He said, "I am THE way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me." This gives some urgency to our story.

Some say, "That doesn't seem fair. It feels exclusive." But what could be more fair or more inclusive? Everyone is welcome and everyone gets in the same way...through faith in Jesus.

When you share your story, it is important to remember that Jesus is not one of many ways to heaven, he is the only way to salvation and eternity spent in His presence.

Read John 3:16

When we learned to write essays in school we all learned about the importance of a clear, concise topic sentence. Well, if the Bible had a topic sentence, it would be John 3:16. John 3:16 may be the most familiar verse in the Bible, "For God so loved the world..." Perhaps you memorized it as a kid. Even if you don't know it by heart, you've probably heard it somewhere along the way. There's a reason it is so familiar. It's an important statement.

It's a key verse in scripture, and it speaks of God's love for us. Love was His motivation, and love must be our motivation as we tell our story. You are not responsible for convincing anyone about the truth of who Jesus is or about the reliability of the Bible, or for solving the problem of pain and suffering in the world. Jesus simply asks you to tell your story...in love...and leave the results up to Him.

LIVE

Read through the book of Matthew. At the end of Matthew, Jesus calls His disciples...including us...to go and share His good news. Reading the book of Matthew will strengthen your understanding of the sacrifice Jesus made to ensure our salvation. It is important to understand the depth of God's love and what He was willing to do in order for us to spend an eternity with Him in Heaven.

What about your story? Who is one person in your life that you are in relationship with, that needs to hear your story and the story of Jesus?

TALK

1. What is your experience with evangelism? How did it make you feel?

2. If you are a Christ follower, share your story with the group. What was your life like before you decided to follow Jesus? Tell the story of how you became a Christ follower. How has this decision made a difference in your life?

3. If you are not a Christ follower yet, you can still share your story of where you are on your spiritual journey, how you got here, and your hopes for the future on your spiritual journey. Remember... everyone's welcome because nobody's perfect and anything's possible.



WHAT'S NEXT?

You've made it through what it looks like to be in a Community Group. Thank you for taking the time to commit to this group life these last 5 weeks.

In group life you can expect your relationships with God and others to continue to grow. You will learn a lot about yourself and group members. But, in order to have a great group experience, you'll need a little structure for your group meetings.

In the following pages there is a Group Commitment that you can utilize to help with the group meetings. Discuss with your group members the expectations and goals you have for the group. Doing life together as a group will help you stay accountable to each other and accomplish the goals you set out to reach.

Here are a few key things to remember about your group when working on the group agreement:

Be Consistent

Keep It Real

Keep It Confidential

Be Respectful

Participate

If you decide not to move forward with your group, contact your leader by phone or email and let them know. It's okay if this group isn't the right fit, but we definitely encourage you to keep trying to find the right fit for you. There is a group out there for you!



COMMUNITY GROUP AGREEMENT

The purpose of this agreement is to help create a predictable group environment where members pursue purpose and community.

Values

Relationships: Prayer and group discussion are key elements. The driving force behind the group is the building of relationships.

Authenticity: People should feel the freedom to be themselves. It's okay to not be okay. Members should feel free to be open and transparent.

Confidentiality: For authenticity to happen, members must be able to trust that issues discussed within the group will not be shared outside of the group.

Respect: Group members will not say anything to embarrass other members. It's okay to disagree.

Availability: Be willing to meet each other's needs outside of group time.

Group Guidelines

Discuss these as a group and come to an agreement:

What day will the group meet?

What time will the group start and stop?

Group will be a closed group until all members agree to add members during a Group Launch.

Group members will attend and participate on a regular basis.