

# **Our Philosophy of Discipleship Community Groups**

## **The Ultimate Goal of Discipleship Community Groups**

Discipleship Community Groups are the primary vehicle for living out the mission of “developing multiplying disciples.” Each community is led by a trained leader and consists of approximately 8-12 Christ-followers living out and growing together as disciples by:

- *Loving Jesus supremely through Bible study, prayer and application of the Word* - Merely hearing God’s Word is insufficient; we must apply it to our lives for there to be fruit. Discipleship Community Groups provide a context where disciples see Biblical truth lived out in others and are practically challenged to apply the truth to specific areas in their own lives.
- *Loving each other humbly through Biblical community and service* - Genuine community isn’t practical in a large crowd. Discipleship Community Groups provide a place where we can build intimate relationships, care for one another, and exercise our spiritual gifts in relation to one another.
- *Loving the world sacrificially through local and global missional outreach* - Discipleship community Groups are the primary means by which we mobilize people together on mission. Each community is intentionally focused on making disciples locally and globally. For more specifics see “Our Philosophy of Evangelism.”

## **Our Strategy for Developing Multiplying Disciples**

Our ultimate goal isn’t simply to make disciples but multiplying disciples, i.e. disciples who are equipped to make disciples of others. Therefore, we will intentionally invest in the lives of others for the purpose of equipping them to be reproducing disciple-makers (Matthew 28:18-20; 2 Timothy 2:2). Four primary elements are involved in developing disciple-making disciples who love Jesus supremely, each other humbly and the world sacrificially:

- *Sharing the Word* (Matthew 28:18-20) - Disciple-making begins with sharing the gospel with those apart from Christ.
- *Teaching the Word* (Matthew 28:18-20) - Disciple-making continues as we teach others the Word. This involves teaching others what it means to love Jesus supremely, each other humbly and the world sacrificially. Teaching the Word normally involves two distinct stages. The first stage is “follow-up.” Those who profess faith in Christ are followed-up for the purpose of establishing them in the faith and teaching them the basics of what it means to be a disciple of Christ. The second stage is “growth.”

This is the lifelong process of growth as a disciple; growing in the knowledge of God and the godly character that flows from that knowledge.

- *Showing the Word* (Philippians 3:17; 1 Corinthians 4:14-17, 10:32-11:1; 1 Thessalonians 1:4-7; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-9) - Disciple-making also involves a Christ-follower imparting his/her life to another, by example, demonstration and imitation. Showing the Word involves modeling the character of a disciple; loving Jesus supremely, each other humbly and the world sacrificially. Disciple-making isn't some barren, educational exercise but is deeply and inescapably relational. It goes beyond simply sharing knowledge and skill to sharing life. Ultimately discipling is done by someone, not by something.
- *Multiplying the Word* (2 Timothy 2:2) - This final element of disciple-making involves intentionally equipping disciples to make disciples of others. The word "equipping" is used to describe the process of training all Christ-followers with knowledge, character, skills and vision so that in love they might disciple others by sharing, teaching and showing the Word. This approach allows the Word to multiply rapidly and comprehensively by scattering disciple-makers throughout the entire world, as opposed to limiting disciple-making to a fixed place, particular program and paid professional that meets once a week. We must remember that disciple-making is not reserved for just an elite few but all Christ-followers.

### **Three Levels of Disciple-making**

Disciple-making is an investment in people through relationships. A leader can only develop 3-12 others at any one time. Therefore, we will organize our Discipleship Community Groups so that there is a limited span of care and disciple-making is occurring on three levels.

- *Pastors discipling Discipleship Community Group Leaders* - Pastors have been given to the church for the distinct purpose of preparing and training the people to do the work of ministry/service. Therefore, pastors are to be equippers, not event planners and program developers. The success of our church is not dependent on building the biggest place, having the coolest programs or employing the finest professionals; the success of our church is dependent on building the best people (i.e., disciple-makers). Our pastors will focus their time on pouring their lives into those who lead our Discipleship Community Groups.
- *Discipleship Community Group Leaders discipling their community groups* - Discipleship Community Group leaders have the responsibility to disciple and shepherd their groups. This also includes pin-pointing a potential group leader and helping him/her grow into a Discipleship Community Group leader. Discipleship group leaders focus on sharing, showing, teaching and multiplying the Word in their groups as they grow together in loving Jesus supremely, each other humbly and the world sacrificially.
- *Discipleship Community groups making disciples locally and globally* - The possibilities are endless here, but the picture here is each member of a Discipleship Community

Group intentionally seeking to make disciples. This may involve a parent discipling his/her children. Or a businessman making disciples at work. Or a stay-at-home mom making disciples in her neighborhood. Or a Discipleship Community making disciples together at a homeless shelter. Or a college student making disciples on a short-term mission trip. Whatever the case, the picture is equipped disciple-makers going out into the local and global community sharing, teaching, showing and multiplying the Word.