

WHAT IS A CITY GROUP?

For us, a City Group is not just a Bible study. It's not just a fellowship group, a social action club, or a support group. And it's certainly not just a weekly meeting. While healthy City Groups include all of those things over time, its primary identity is as a family of missionaries learning to follow Jesus together in every area of their lives.

A City Group is a group of people asking "what does loving my city and neighbor really look like?" and realizing Jesus may ask far more of them than they ever thought. The great news is that we get to experience and know Jesus where He is — on mission to the broken and lost.

The way we define City Groups at Providence is:

"A Family on Mission that demonstrates the kingdom tangibly and declares the gospel of Jesus Christ creatively."

Here's what we mean by this statement:

A FAMILY

We believe that in order to live the life of a disciple, we must live as a family. Why? It's who we are! The bible never describes a picture of being a loner Christian - because that's not our identity. We are saved into a group - a family! When you start following Jesus, there is a commitment to him, but a commitment to others as well. This should cause us to think...not about "me and Jesus", but rather about "us and Jesus."

Not only is it who we are but, it's how we flourish. It's God's design for our own good. Christians are made to live together. And while our ultimate source of life, hope and healing is God himself, many times the way God chooses to show himself is through each other.

ON MISSION

Now, City Groups aren't solely families- they are families "on Mission." This mission of God, to redeem a people for himself, to build a kingdom under his Son Jesus, and to restore all things into a new heaven and earth, is the very foundation for all of life. It is what our God is doing. It is what is communicated in the Scriptures. And it is what you and I are called into as Christians.

At Providence, our mission is to do that to the best of our ability. We want to co-

labor with God in making and sending disciples of Jesus. That we would help people meet Jesus, learn to follow Jesus, and look like Jesus. And as a church family, we want to help people see their life fit within the grand mission of God.

Most churches would not disagree with us on this particular issue, but when it comes to practically working out what it means to make disciples, everyone has a different definition and strategy. We believe that the mission of making disciples should play out in two primary ways in EVERY community, from large to small, and every individual.

DEMONSTRATE THE KINGDOM TANGIBLY

The first way is to “demonstrate the kingdom tangibly.” Just as Jesus came demonstrating the kingdom through selfless acts of service, we actively look for opportunities to meet the felt and real needs of our family and its neighbors. We seek to become a blessing to each other and demonstrate the reality of God’s new kingdom to one-another. We spend time with one another, care for and serve one another and pray for one another.

When you look at Jesus, however, He did not simply stop at healing and meeting needs. He consistently spoke a true message of great hope to those whom he encountered. Just look at the story of the woman at the well in John 4. He met her where she was but through her expressed need He spoke to the true needs of her heart.

DECLARE THE GOSPEL CREATIVELY

As communities patterned after Jesus’s life, we also “declare the gospel creatively.” A City Group listens to and understands the stories of their neighbors in order to be able to tell the gospel story in ways that are good news to those specific people. We want our communities to wrestle with and understand how Jesus’s perfect life, His sacrificial death, and His resurrection in power are indeed good news to their neighbors.

CONCLUSION VISION VS. REALITY

Living life together in the way we have defined is a summary of what we believe is the New Testament vision of community. Vision rarely matches reality, however, and in City Groups we contend with sin, Satan, and the world’s impact on the individual lives of everyone involved in a community. It is always important to have a vision for where you are going in leadership, but it’s equally important to understand how to start pursuing that vision in small steps.

In the next section of this guide, we will talk about practical details of leading a community of people to live out this vision over time.