

City Group Leaders Field Guide



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Introduction

At Providence Church, two of our core values is to see every follower of Christ 1) live in familial community with one another and 2) be on mission together to share Christ with those who don't know Him. City Groups are so much more than a mid-week gathering. They are the ideal context for community and mission to be lived out.

Additionally, the vision we have had as a church from our earliest days was that every person in the city of Omaha would hear the good news of the gospel, even those who wouldn't darken the doors of a church. A movement of multiplying City Groups connected to Sunday Gatherings of the church is how we think we can do this in our city.

This vision is only possible with faithful leaders like you who take responsibility for the thriving of each and every City Group. As a leader, you shepherd your City Group by providing care and oversight (in cooperation with church leadership), and you challenge the community toward mission.

WHY YOU SHOULD USE THIS FIELD GUIDE

This City Group Leader Field Guide is meant to help you launch and lead a healthy, reproducing City Group over time. Like any field guide, this does not have everything you could ever need in leadership, but we hope it provides a basic framework and tools to help you navigate the journey of being a City Group leader.

HOW TO USE THIS FIELD GUIDE

This guide was written to help you understand why we pursue City Groups, what it means to be a leader, and provide some helpful tools and answers to common questions.

For all leaders, the “why” is crucially important, so we have included some of our core convictions and philosophies of ministry in Section I. We require all potential leaders to read it and encourage you to ask any questions you might have to your City Groups Director, Pastor or Elder.

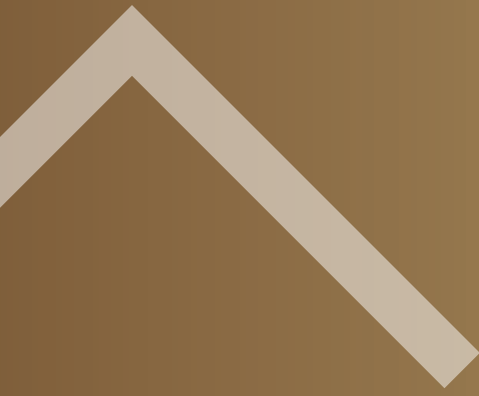
Section II hits on the practical details of City Group leadership. What does leadership look like? What is expected of me? How does multiplication happen?

Finally, as all of us continue in leadership, situations will arise where we need help. The third and final section of the book contains a host of resources and FAQ’s that you can reference along the way.

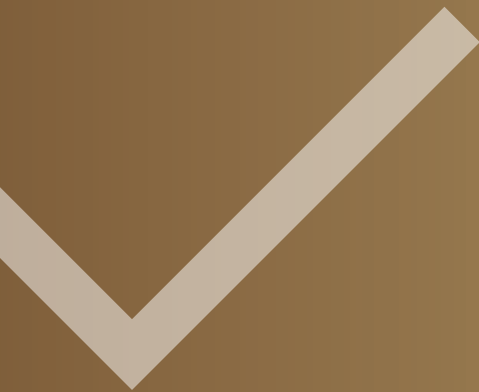
Our prayer is that this book serves you well to make much of Jesus as you lead others to follow Him together!

God Bless,
Jourdan Fichter
City Groups Director





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Section One:

A Vision And Theology For City Groups

“All of our lives as Christians are to be lived in the presence of God, with the presence of God, and through the presence of God.”

“Where the church goes, the presence of God goes.”

Providence Vision

PROVIDENCE CHURCH VISION

All of life with the presence of God.

CITY GROUPS VISION

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

PROVIDENCE VISION

Before we talk about the “what” of leadership, we always think it is important to remind you of the “why.” Why does Providence Church exist?

THE GOSPEL

The Gospel is like a diamond. The beauty of it can be seen simply and in its entirety as a whole. Yet, upon closer examination, you find a multitude of beautiful intricacies that creates its value as one object. Every angle in which you look at the diamond you find a different way to see it sparkle. It is part of what makes the diamond a beautiful and valuable treasure.

So too, the gospel has many glorious aspects that comprise this great message. In its unity as one message, the gospel is the good news that God saves sinners through Jesus Christ. But upon closer examination, we see many aspects of what makes that summary true. In it, we find forgiveness of sins, removal of shame, cleansing, renewal, adoption, restored dignity, new life under God’s leadership, and much more. These aspects are part of the unique angles that shine the goodness of God in salvation of sinners.

At Providence, we believe that one of the major themes of Scripture communicating the overall work of the gospel, is restored life in God’s presence. What makes justification, expiation, adoption, regeneration and

other fantastic elements of the gospel possible, is that they happen because of a restored presence with God. Adoption is wonderful, because we are adopted into the presence of God’s family. Renewal is possible, because we are now indwelt by God’s powerful presence. Holiness is possible, because we are united to the presence of God in Christ. It is, in fact, God’s presence that grounds the gospel glories in our life.

ALL OF LIFE WITH THE PRESENCE OF GOD

Therefore, we desire to see our church live ***All of life with the presence of God.***

All of our lives as Christians are to be lived in the presence of God, with the presence of God, and through the presence of God. Acknowledging and being aware of God’s presence is not a Sunday morning reality, or a section of our lives. As Christians, the glory of the gospel means all of our life is now lived in God’s intimate presence. Salvation is fundamentally enjoying what once was lost. We are no longer separated in sin, but experience intimate presence with God through Christ. Living in this reality primarily has two aspects for our church, vertically living with God’s presence, and horizontally living with God’s presence.

First, living all of life with the presence of God means we acknowledge His presence in our lives moment-by-moment. No parts of your life are removed from God’s presence in your

life. He is not merely a spoke in the wheel of priorities in your life, he is the hub in which everything else is attached to. Believing this reality can radically change our lives. Our Sunday mornings, City Group meetings, and 10-minute quiet times are not the moments God meets you. He has made a home inside you in order to be present in all of life. Your life is not meaninglessly drifting through the American grind, it is empowered by the presence of God Almighty for joy in life.

Second, God's presence on earth today is in His people. There are no special buildings or monuments where God's presence uniquely dwells, similar to the Old Testament temple. Now, the temple is the church. His presence dwells in us. His holy, powerful presence is revealed in the world through the body of Christ. If true, this means everywhere we go, we are bringing the presence of God with us. Where the church goes, the presence of God goes. As we dwell in neighborhoods, enter work environments, or sit in restaurants we are engaging people and places with the actual presence of God. We truly are salt and light, because we bring God's presence wherever we go.

SALVATION

Salvation is the presence of God forever. Until we experience that reality in full one day, we pursue the fullness of that vision in our day. We seek to become aware of God's presence throughout our daily lives, and we seek to bring God's presence into all areas God has called us to inhabit. In doing so, we experience fullness of life. In His presence is the fullness of joy (Psalm

16:11). Therefore we seek flourishing joy in living all of life with the presence of God.

WHY CITY GROUPS?

In addition to City Groups naturally flowing from our vision as a church, there are other important reasons we pursue them at Providence. There are three reasons in particular that we want to highlight: a theological reason, a philosophical reason, and a practical reason.

A THEOLOGICAL REASON

One of the key distinctive theological reasons we have chosen City Groups resides in what some theologians call the “community apologetic”. Through passages like John 13 and John 17, we see a unique testimony that God’s people collectively give for the gospel.

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

John 13:34-35

Jesus tells us that one of the most winsome ways that we can tell the world about Him and that we belong to Him is by the way we, as believers, love one another. In fact, one of the primary purposes of Christian community is to show the lost world what the love of Christ looks like. The shared life of Christians is an extremely compelling

argument for the Christian faith! In fact, when you survey the course of Christian history, the majority of conversions have come through non—Christians having access to a loving, Christ—centered community where the grace of God is put on display through repenting, forgiving relationships.

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

Acts 2:42-47

For us, this means that the church must not simply gather for worship and scatter individually for mission. Rather, we must gather for worship and gather for mission. Our non—Christian friends need to hear the gospel preached, but they also need to experience Christians living together in meaningful community.

Also, throughout the New Testament, it seems that the community is involved in all facets of life, not simply a once a week gathering for study or discussion.

To be faithful to the Bible and effective in mission, we have to pursue community and mission together over time.

A PHILOSOPHICAL REASON

Philosophy of ministry is the direct application of theological convictions into a unique cultural context. Our theological convictions about the character of God, the truth of the gospel, and our mission in the world doesn't change, but our culture shapes how we apply those truths into functional ministry. Generally speaking, the American culture we live in, and also the culture of the city of Omaha, can be characterized by three things: individualism, materialism, and consumerism.

Unfortunately the worldview of the culture has pervaded the worldview of the local church. Many of the people who engage in our worship gatherings and participate in our ministries are more formed by their unconscious desire to consume than what the Scriptures teach. We are systemically "disciplined" by the culture we inhabit, and, because of this, the church must have a systemic response to disciple its people in the way of Jesus.

The American church has often recognized the problem of individualism, presenting small groups as the typical solution for isolated people. Similarly, we recognize the problem of materialism, and have presented opportunities for radical generosity. It is very rare, however, for the church to have a response to consumerism. We are still plagued by systems of thought that cater to consumers rather than encourage individuals to be self—feeding, self—leading, self—multiplying missionaries.

In order for the church to be effective in discipling the people whom God has entrusted to us, we need to have a systemic response to this pervasive worldview. We cannot expect to confront idolatry on a deep level if our systems are reinforcing consumerism. The "typical" small group is highly driven around the needs of the Christian, is often centered around teaching or Bible study from an outside source, and rarely asks for more than one meeting per week.

The practices of City Group present a compelling alternative that calls people from consumerism to the life of a missionary in community. Though it will take time to lead people toward this kind of life and there will be many bumps along the way, we want to aim for rhythms and structures in City Groups that help everyday people live out their God — given identities and callings.

A PRACTICAL REASON

Our final reason for pursuing City Groups is practical. In order to embody the church in unique neighborhoods and networks of people in our city we must have small communities who are uniquely expressing the gospel all over Omaha. If we want to engage the entire city with the gospel of Christ, we have to take the church to them. This requires every single member of the body of Christ to live a missionary life, not simply some people doing ministry on Sundays. City Groups provide the vehicle by which the church scattered can engage every sphere of society. Hundreds of people gathered on a Sunday can make a small dent in reaching the lost in our city, but hundreds of missionaries living out the gospel together in our city has the power to radically change our city for the sake of the gospel.

Also, as a church with hundreds of attenders, we must have a place where the saints are cared for and shepherded, where the “one anothers” (John 13:34—35 & Acts 2:42—47) of Scripture are lived out, and where we can exercise oversight and authority consistent with the New Testament. If all we were to do was corporately gather and corporately engage in mission, our elders would still be lacking in the execution of the biblical vision for shepherding the flock of God.

So practically, Providence needs a vehicle by which the church can care for one another, support one another, and where we can practically meet the needs that arise in the community of God.



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.

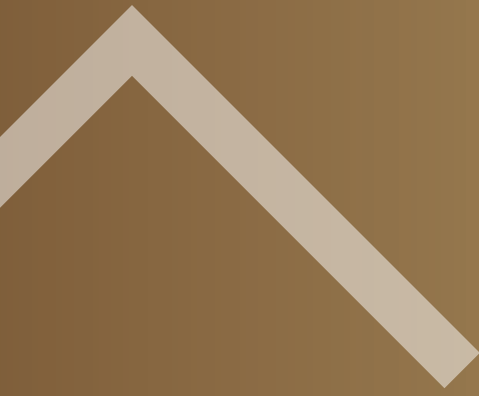
DECLARE THE GOSPEL CREATIVELY

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.

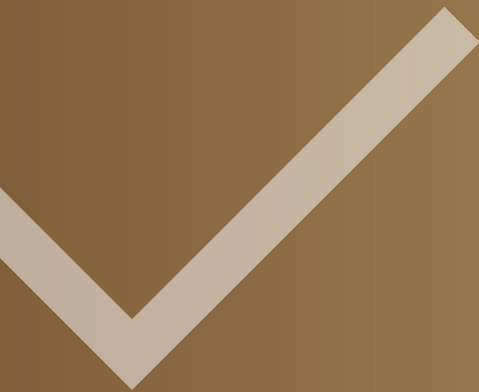
CONCLUSION VISION VS. REALITY

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.



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Section Two:

Practical Leadership Of A City Group

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

Acts 2:42-47

LEADERSHIP OF A CITY GROUP

Up to this point, we have been looking at the “why” behind City Groups.

We will now move on to both the “what” and the “how.”

In this section we will look at:

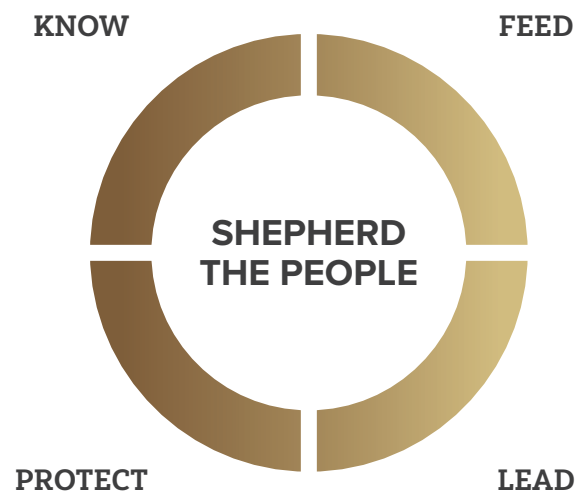
- City Group leadership
- City Group practices

Faithful and effective leadership is not merely beneficial for living together on mission, it is vital. As a leader, your job is to shepherd your City Group by providing oversight in cooperation with our church leadership as well as leading the community toward mission.

What are my primary roles as a City Group leader?

Lead the mission.

Shepherd the people.



LEAD THE MISSION

As a City Group leader, how do I lead the mission?

Define the Gospel

The gospel is the good news of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

In Genesis we see God create the world and everything in it. He created mankind and created us to be in relationship with him. However in chapter 3 we see Adam and Eve reject God's way and decide to follow their own way. In short, they sin. In doing so they are cast out of the presence of God and can no longer be in relationship with him. To remedy this, God sent his son Jesus to live the life we were called to live. He was perfect in every way and did not give in to sin. He then went to the cross to die, to be the sacrifice for those who would place their faith in him. He died and evil thought it had won, but on the third day Christ rose from the dead, defeating sin, satan, and death. He then ascended into heaven to be in the presence of the father.

This good news is not just a belief system—it is the real power of God (Rom 1:16) that brings victory over sin. Through Jesus' victory, we are brought back into a right relationship with God and live with His presence inside of us. When we embrace the gospel, it transforms every part of our lives—our worldviews, our desires, our relationships, and our eternity!

As a City Group leader you must boldly and consistently define the gospel for your group.

Declare the Gospel

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?

Romans 10:14

The reality in the world is there are billions of people around us everyday who do not know Jesus. They will live, die, and end up spending eternity apart from God in hell. God deserves worship and people need the Gospel. We as Christians have been given the best news in history and get the privilege to join God on his mission to see the Gospel go forth.

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!"

Romans 10:15

Christian, you have been sent! Jesus sent us in Matthew 28 to make disciples of all nations and this starts with declaring the Gospel. You have been invited into the greatest mission anyone can be a part of.

It's the best news and the greatest mission and yet we find that it is often difficult for us to communicate. Why is that? For one, we are fearful of what others think of us. Secondly, we simply have not practiced sharing the gospel enough to feel comfortable.

Your City Group can be a safe place to practice sharing the gospel in a clear and personal way. Make it a regular rhythm of your group to have times where you can practice sharing the gospel with each other. Then challenge each other to go and share it with others! Look for opportunities to celebrate what Jesus has done and what He is doing through the lives of group members.

Do you want a resource to help you and your City Group grow in your knowledge and proclamation of the gospel?

Check out **What is the Gospel & The Romans Road** in the Field Guide Appendix.

Demonstrate the Gospel

A Christ-centered community has an opportunity to demonstrate and declare the gospel in a way that is entirely unique. This is called the community apologetic and is done primarily in two ways: loving one another and serving our neighbors.

Loving One Another. We show the world what the Kingdom of God is like when we love one another, serve one another, forgive one another, and care for one another in ways that are fundamentally different than the world. When a member of your community loses a job, you provide for the needs of their family together, you help that person find new work. When someone in your community has a baby, you make sure every need they have is covered for months. When you celebrate birthdays, the whole

community joins in the fun and celebrates the faithfulness of God for another year.

Serving Our Neighbors. Another way of demonstrating the kingdom is with tangible acts of service and love, both to your city and your neighbors. If you're trying to share the good news of Jesus's life, death, and resurrection with others then we need to understand and address how we can serve them well. We certainly need to engage parts of the city where poverty is overt, brokenness is visible, and pain and suffering are evident, but we also need to think on a distinctly local level — what does it look like to serve my neighbor? Serving neighbors may mean coaching soccer, serving on the PTA, or cooking a meal when someone is in need. It can look like babysitting kids so couples can have a date night, or watching pets when people are out of town.

Interested in a resource to help identify which of these ways to "Lead the Mission" you are most naturally inclined towards?

Check out **Triperspectival Leadership** in the Field Guide Appendix.

SHEPHERD THE PEOPLE

As a City Group leader, how do I shepherd the people?

A leader who does not deeply care for the people they are leading is a tyrant. Please don't be a tyrant! The dominant theme of leadership in the Bible is that of a shepherd. In the Old Testament, many men of faith are described in this way. Abel, Abraham, Jacob and David, just to name a few, were all shepherds. God Himself is called a Shepherd in a number of significant passages that consequently refer to His people as sheep.

"And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd."

Ezekiel 34:23

Within the pages of the New Testament, the picture continues as Jesus calls His apostles to be shepherds of the church. The apostles then give this charge to the elders of local churches who appoint various shepherds within the congregation. The role of a City Group leader is to shepherd the flock with which they have been entrusted.

How do I be an effective shepherd and what responsibilities come with this calling?

You must know, feed, protect, and lead the flock.

Know

The first step to being a good shepherd is to know the sheep. This involves knowing about them and knowing them

personally in a growing relationship. Here are some things to think through for each individual you are leading:

Know Their Past. Get to know their testimony. Everyone has a story. We all have our own set of unique experiences and circumstances. From heartaches to happiness, we've all gone through (and will go through) circumstances that help shape who we are, how we think and how we live. In fact, one of the most powerful ways that we connect with each other is by sharing our stories with one another.

Know Their Present. Get to know their hopes, fears, and needs. The things that we hope for and the things that we fear provide a window into our head and our heart and show what we value and what we believe about God.

Presence. There is no substitute for being with your sheep and we cannot disregard the importance of simple togetherness. A good shepherd must practice the discipline of being present in body and mind with those he/she leads. Never is this truer than when crisis strikes. Think about a time when you went through something really hard. I bet you can remember vividly where you were when you grieved or when you heard the news. I'm sure you can remember who walked next to you during that season and who you cried with. What you don't probably remember is all the words that were said to you. During a crisis, being physically present is usually more important than having the right words to say. A good shepherd celebrates with those who celebrate and mourns with those who mourn.

Feed

Three times Jesus commands Peter to “feed [His] sheep” as proof and consequence of his love for Jesus. Jesus was concerned about the feeding of His sheep because of His great love for His children. The people to whom we minister need spiritual food. As City Group leaders we want to teach and remind them of the good news of Jesus so that they grow in maturity. One mark of a mature believer is their ability to “self feed.” This means that a person’s ability to grow in knowledge and love for Christ is not fully contingent on someone else leading them in devotion and study of Scripture. This idea of “self-feeding” is an early step of sanctification that must be taught and demonstrated to those we are leading. It equips them for future seasons of life when you no longer are directly leading them. A person will continue to grow in maturity as they have their lives submitted to Scripture. The best way to help them is by not only teaching them Scripture, but also helping them be taught by Scripture on their own. Jesus’s heart was to have obedient disciples, not just consumers of teaching.

Practically, read the Word together and discuss it as a regular rhythm of your City Group. Talk together about not only what God is speaking in his Word, but also how to obey and enjoy what He commands. Additionally, you can encourage them with supplemental resources like books, sermons, articles, etc. Be creative, bearing in mind the specific ways that people are wired and regularly ask about what people have been learning. A good leader will make sure that the group is feeding on good food.

Protect

Jesus warns that false teachers will arise

as wolves disguised as sheep. We have a responsibility to recognize such dangers and protect the flock. We must speak out against that which is misleading. The Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep and thus we too must be willing to sacrifice our own rights for the sake of the good of others. This means that we must be willing to train ourselves to distinguish good from evil. Practically, this necessitates the pursuit of godliness through prayer, study, and community. City Group leaders are the first line of defense in protecting the sheep. This will require compassion, tremendous courage, and a strong connection with church leadership. Contact a local elder and work in conjunction with them to help those sheep who have erred to come back into the fold.

Lead

We recognize that the entirety of this resource is aimed at equipping you to be an effective leader and leadership has already been mentioned at several points already. Specifically what we are communicating here is that a Shepherd is a leader. A helpful way to think about this specific role is to think of yourself not as a controller but rather as the lead initiator. Initiating is an effective way to serve the people and is central to Shepherding the individuals you are leading.

Sheep follow. Shepherds must lead. And they must lead not only by exhortation, but also by example, pulling rather than pushing toward the Lord. This responsibility carries with it the necessity of a pure and holy life, which should be emulated by the flock. Leaders should have new, personal stories of obedience, successes, and failures as they follow Christ.

EXPECTATIONS OF A CITY GROUP LEADER & CALENDAR

In addition to leading and shepherding your City Group, what else is expected?

1. Become a member — Membership is a commitment to live out our identity and calling at Providence as lead missionaries and lead servants. Membership is you expressing your desire to be counted as a sheep of this flock and, therefore, to become an individual for which our elders are spiritually accountable (Hebrews 13:17). We would like for all leaders to become members within one year.

2. Attend a City Group Workshop — Workshops are designed for you and your leadership team to complete together prior to your public launch. It serves to align the vision and to help the leaders to begin to think like a missionary team.

3. Participate in Team Meetings — Captains are responsible for facilitating and leading regular meetings for your leadership team. These are times to make space for planning, prepping, and praying for your City Group.

4. Captains meet regularly with a Coach — Regular touch points help us to care for the overall well-being of City Group leaders and exercise faithful oversight of our communities.

Knowing what's going on in the lives of our leaders and communities enables Providence's leadership to faithfully care for and serve its sheep.

5. Participate in leader trainings and events — We will hold two required trainings and one celebratory event for CG leadership each year. We ask that our leaders attend all of these gatherings. In addition there are various optional events/lunches throughout the year that CG leaders are invited to.

6. Lead your community through church-wide initiatives — During certain seasons we may ask every City Group to study and go through the same content together. During these seasons of alignment, we would ask that you lead your community to participate fully.

7. Develop emerging leaders — Multiplication is a necessary part of the mission of making and sending disciples. Current leaders must be intentional to raise up new leaders as City Groups grow and multiply.

CITY GROUP CAPTAINS

Working alongside their City Group leadership team; Captains are to be vision champions- helping the leadership team to discern the City Group's God-given vision, set/achieve goals and raise up/develop new leaders.

- Focus on leadership development
- Ensure City Group members are being disciplined
- Organize and facilitate leadership team meetings.
- Active/open communication with Coach.

Captains must read "**COACH Model**" by Keith E Webb.

CITY GROUP COACHES

Working alongside Captains; Coaches are to be relational resources- serving City Group Captains & leadership teams as a shepherd and problem solver.

- Be a relational resource to Captains/ Leadership Teams
- Regular check-ins with Captains/Leadership Teams
- Active/open communication with Providence City Group Director
- Help serve/lead at City Group Leaders Trainings (on a needs basis)

Coaches must read "**LEAD**" by Paul David Tripp.

BASIC CALENDAR OF EVENTS FOR LEADERS

Typically we will gather at the following times throughout the year:

- **August** — This training is focused on vision and is crucial to us all being on the same page moving towards a common goal.
- **January** — After the holidays, we reconvene our leaders to debrief the fall season and prepare for the spring.
- **May** — This is a time to gather leaders together to celebrate all that God has done and say "thank you" for the many ways you have loved and served throughout the year.

Please make every effort to attend. These are very important gatherings for the encouragement and equipping of our City Group leaders!

You can also expect Leaders Lunches throughout the year as well as our annual Summer Book Club. Both of which are optional.

**Captains & Coaches will have additional required trainings/ meetings throughout the year.

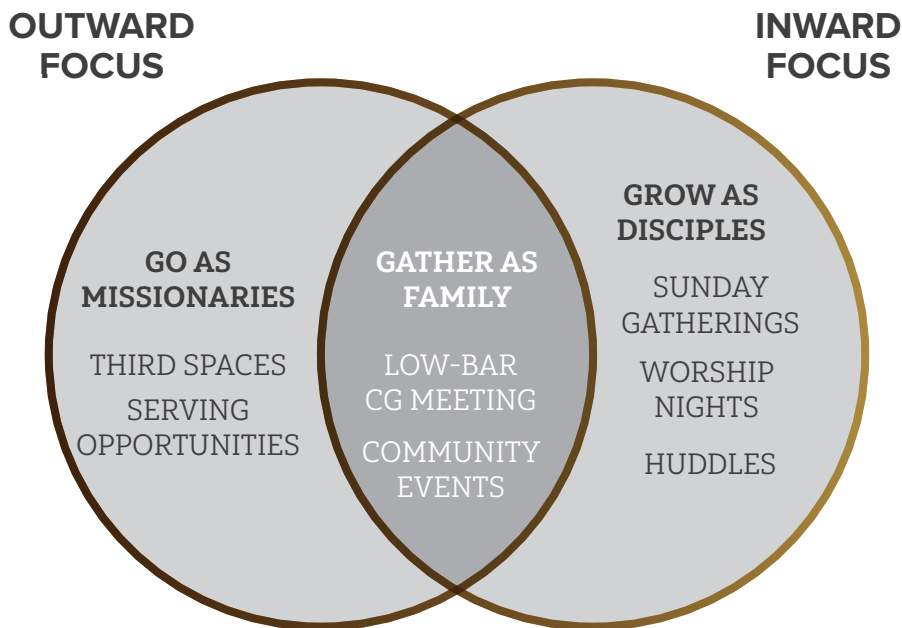
PRACTICES OF CITY GROUPS

Now that we have covered the vision and philosophy of City Groups, let's look at the practices of what these communities do each week. It's important to note that a CG will not do all three practices on day one but this is the direction toward which the CG should aim.

We have many great stories we could share about how different groups took significant steps toward living out our vision. While no two collections of people are identical, there are a few practices we have found to be helpful

in moving communities of believers to act differently and begin orienting their lives around making disciples.

These practices help us facilitate inclusive City Groups who genuinely grow in their knowledge of the Lord and also engage intentionally and meaningfully in pockets of lostness all over our city. A City Group is not just these three things, but these are helpful practices for a family on mission.



SEASONS AND RHYTHMS

Before we unpack each practice, let's discuss two important concepts that shape our approach. The concepts to consider are seasons and rhythms. When we train people on these practices, we are often asked, "How can we do all of this in our already busy lives?" And it's a great question to ask! While we want to pursue greater commitment and devotion to one another and God's mission, we also need to think practically about cultivating seasons and rhythms in our group life.

Seasons

Consider what season of life and ministry you and your group members are in before defining how you will gather together.

There are always seasons in the life of a community. Some seasons are full of fun and laughter, some are full of heartache and sadness, and some are naturally busier than others. Before you try to fit together the practices we line out, make sure, as a leader, you consider what season of life your group is in and adjust expectations accordingly.

If you are just starting out and your group members are incredibly busy with small children, consider that demand of life and feel free to adjust the ways you gather. If you are in a season of getting to know each other, take the time to focus on cultivating healthy relationships before you ask people to sacrificially go on mission. If it is the summer time and people are in and out of town, adapt the rhythms of the community and try different approaches.

Rhythms

After determining the season of the group, think through applicable rhythms and how frequently you might gather. For groups with more free time available, consider gathering more often. For communities who are spread out and stretched thin, once a week may be all you can manage in that season.

We suggest leaders think through the lense of a month rather than a single week. As you think through the practices of your group, consider they don't have to happen the same way all the time and every member of your community will not always be able to participate. In the same way a nuclear family has different seasons of life with unique needs at different times, so too do City Groups! Every member's calendar does not have to align perfectly before you schedule your rhythms.

City Group does not have to be overwhelmingly complex. Think outside the box of a week and ask, "How might we creatively pursue these practices over time?" As a leader, feel free to mix up the practices so that they flow with different rhythms during different seasons!

We recommend communities, at minimum, gather in these rhythms:

- 1. Sunday Gatherings**
- 2. Weekly in Huddles**
- 3. Monthly for Family Meal, Worship Night & Serving**
- 4. Quarterly in Third Space**
- 5. Yearly in Equipping Environments**

GATHER

Family Meals

The first way City Groups at Providence gather is in what we call a family meal. Although we value studying the Bible and believe everyone should invest deeply in the Scriptures (more on this later), we humbly suggest that if your objective is to be a family, you might need to do something in addition to your Bible study together.

As City Groups, being a spiritual family is the driving force of what we're after in our primary meeting time. There are two critical pieces to orient this as a time for practicing family life:

GATHERING AROUND A MEAL

The best conversations happen around the dinner table. Real life conversation happens in real life situations! When this is the primary gathering, you will need to learn one another's names, stories, vocations, and passions.

Sharing a meal together — one that requires a recipe, not a microwave — is a symbol of your fellowship. We think it is a helpful practice for every community, because it is a regular practice of most families.

LOWERING THE BARRIER TO BIBLE STUDY

The second component of a family meal is intentional discussion, often centered on God's Word. Having led and coached a lot of small groups over time, we have seen a lot of different approaches to Bible study. Often Bible studies make many assumptions about the knowledge of those participating — that a person knows the basic storyline of the Bible,

that a person knows how to study the Scriptures for themselves, or that they have a copy of the curriculum or heard the sermon, and so on. Assumptions can actually create significant barriers for new people entering your community.

We humbly suggest you do two things in a discussion time. First, lower the barrier of entry into the conversation. We want to study the Bible in a way that doesn't require any minimum knowledge to meaningfully participate. Second, we want to create an environment where individuals are expected to contribute, not simply consume. We think this kind of approach will help people engage God's Word for themselves and cultivate an environment where we want to obey what God's Word tells us to do.

This means, as a leader, you can spend time helping people be disciples and interacting as family rather than preparing a Bible study or teaching a lesson. If you are following a reading plan like the SOAP Method (see appendix), we suggest discussing a chapter from that day's reading with the group. Once you choose a chapter, read it together and use the following questions as a guide:

- What did you like or not like about what we just read?
- Was there anything you didn't understand?
- What did you learn about God?
- What did you learn about humanity?
- What did you learn about Jesus?

- Regardless of where your faith is at right now, if you were to apply what we learned about God to something in your life this week, what would that look like?

These questions give an opportunity to consider the gospel and reinforce obedience to the Word, rather than just learning. You'll be amazed how fruitful a discussion can be using this simple method!

Do you want a resource to help you and your City Group study the Bible together?

Check out the **SOAP document** in the Field Guide Appendix.

Community Events

The second way City Groups gather is through various community events. Being less formal in nature, community events (like game nights, sporting events, BBQs, etc.) give space to both foster community and encourage outreach.

GROW

Sunday Gatherings

The people of God have always gathered. We gather on Sundays, not out of obligation, but out of anticipation that Jesus is exalted and we are changed as we delight in His word, worship together, and remember the Lord's supper. This gathered rhythm helps us unify around the gospel.

Worship Nights

Every month we take an evening to gather with the specific intent to worship and pray together. It is in prayer that we acknowledge God's authority in our world, we admit our dependence on Him, and we plead with Him to move in our lives and in the lives of others. It is also a time where we connect as a family during the week.

Huddles

The tension many City Groups face is the desire to keep things "low-bar" enough so outsiders feel welcome, but engaging enough so believers can "dig deep" in the harder questions and doctrines of our faith. We often feel as though we have to give up one for the other. Instead, we encourage groups that desire to "go deeper" to start Huddles. A Huddle is a smaller group of two-five believers of the same gender who commit to meeting outside the large group's meeting time. This is the place to study the Bible and be known deeply by another.

There are Three Elements to Huddles:

- 1. Learn & Lean** — We want to read God's Word every day and be held accountable to what we need to DO in response.
- 2. Confess & Comfort** — We want to confess and repent of our sin and disobedience AND remind one another to believe the good news of Christ's perfect life, his atoning death, and his resurrection.
- 3. Praise & Pray** — We want to praise God for the work He is doing in our lives and ask that He would continue to do so. We also want to

consider opportunities we have to share the gospel, and then pray, by name, for individual people.

This weekly rhythm cultivates obedience as a disciple and forms the backbone of City Groups. It helps people move from a consumer to a contributor in the life of a community. Also, this kind of gathering is the basic tool of discipling. The beauty of a Huddle is that you can do it with anybody! Huddle is the basic tool to disciple a new follower of Jesus.

A Huddle takes about an hour to accomplish if you stay on track and is an excellent way to foster deep intimacy with God and an understanding of the Scriptures.

Do you want a resource to help you and your City Group implement Huddles?

Check out the **Huddle document** in the Field Guide Appendix.

Equipping Environments

Another way we grow is by engaging in seasons of focused learning. While Huddles are essential in reinforcing the basic disciplines of the Christian life, additional avenues of spiritual formation are necessary for growth in Christ-likeness. Equipping classes, Retreats/Conferences and Men/Women's Ministries are different spaces Providence has for you to grow as a disciple of Jesus.

Our church offers various classes to equip you to study the Bible, learn to evangelize and apply theology to daily life. Our aim

for classes is to encourage God's people to know Him intimately, treasure Him deeply, and reflect His character so they can make disciples who do the same.

As a CG leader you have so much to plan and prepare for each week. We encourage you to utilize these equipping environments as a way of stewarding well both your time and your group's spiritual formation. For example, if your CG is comprised mostly of new believers, a class covering the basic beliefs of Christian theology could be helpful. If the life stages in your CG are similar, consider a class that could enlighten your understanding of how to be faithful with that season.

Practically, we encourage Huddles to take a class together because learning and growth is more effective when done in community.

GO Third Places

Up to this point, we reoriented a typical American church small group with a family meal and cultivated discipleship with Huddles. A third place is where a City Group becomes intentionally missional.

Unless we make time to go be with people outside our community, we often won't do it. Very few of us naturally drift into mission. What does it mean to obey Jesus by being a missionary? Obedience means gathering for the sake of people who don't know Jesus!

Third place can include serving people; however, it is not only about service. Mission is about people, not projects. We

must think through ways we can integrate people into our communities through a variety of different interactions, not just serving at an arm's length. Going to a third place is an attempt to introduce your lost friends to your community.

WHAT MAKES A GOOD PLACE TO INVITE PEOPLE?

We use three words to describe it: neutral, natural, and regular. An effective third place is neutral ground that is informal and non-committal. It naturally fits into the rhythms of your lost friends' lives, and we gather there regularly.

Deciding where to gather for a third place depends on the people you are trying to reach. Ask the question, "Where do people already naturally spend time? How can we gather there?" For some of our downtown City Groups, this may be an after work happy hour. Downtown professionals naturally gather there after the workday. For some of our moms with younger kids, a natural place might be a park where other moms and kids play during the day. It might be neighborhood restaurants on the weekends or at school events.

A third place creates space where someone can belong before they believe. We want to gather regularly to invite those who don't know Jesus to spend time with us frequently.

As a final note, understand that not everyone in your CG may be able to participate in the same third place. It's often that a City Group has a few different third places, and not everyone is at all of them all the time. Aim to have a few natural places in locations and at times where a few people from the CG can regularly gather with a

few people who don't know Jesus.

Serving Opportunities

Providence has various local mission partnerships. Consider what it would look like for your City Group to help serve alongside one of our partners. Whether that's organizing a drive for Lewis & Clark Middle School, providing a meal for Global friends, or putting together graduation baskets for the Santa Monica House. Taking time and making space for your City Group to serve moves people from talking about being Christians to actually going and being Christians.

How Do I Do All This?

Executing all of these gatherings can be challenging, no matter the environment or the people in your group. We did our best to answer many of the most common questions on this topic in the third section of this guide (see the FAQ's), but in general, we would recommend three things.

First, take it slow. You are not running a sprint in City Group, you are running a marathon. Take time to learn and develop these rhythms and don't try to smash them all together in a week.

Second, talk to a coach. Your leadership and CG coach are here to help you along the journey. Our elders, coaches, and other CG leaders have encountered quite a few situations and can help you through. Just give them a call!

Third, pray and seek the Lord. While the practices outlined above are helpful, every community is different and the Holy Spirit will give guidance to you in your leadership. We encourage you to pray and seek God's help as you lead!

OUTCOMES OF CITY GROUPS

As you process the vision for City Groups, the requirements of leadership, and the typical stages and times for group development, it can be easy to forget what you hope will happen. When we think about the success of a City Group, it looks different in different seasons. Yet over time, as we labor together to be more like Christ and make disciples, there are four consistent outcomes we hope to see.

1. Gospel Transformation — God uses life in community and on mission for the discipleship and growth of everyone involved. As we center our efforts on the gospel of Christ and the Word of God, we believe leaders and participants will grow in Christ-likeness. Life transformation groups are designed toward this end, but there are many other ways that God will accomplish this outcome.

2. Biblical Community — A City Group led by a capable leader will facilitate an environment where Christ-centered relationships grow and Christian charity is possible. Rich relationships are the fruit of intentional time spent together. Stories of friendship, encouragement, support, and care will all arise as we live alongside each other in authentic relationships. The family meal is designed to facilitate this kind of community, but the providential circumstances of each person's life, along with many other factors will contribute to deep, Christ-centered relationships.

3. Fruitful Mission — Faithful leadership not only helps participants stay accountable to Jesus and His mission, but also resources them to demonstrate and declare Christ in each sphere of influence. While the results of faithful evangelism are outside our control, God's Word never returns void. By the grace of God, we hope to see new Christians enter the kingdom and immature disciples flourish and multiply. Third places are designed to help us interact with lost people, but individuals are going to need to share Christ and disciple those who are interested to see new disciples made, baptized, equipped, and sent.

4. Multiplication — Healthy gospel-centered living tends to lead toward growth and multiplication. City Groups are at their best when they continue reinvesting all of what they know into the lives of others. As leaders serve faithfully, we believe new City Group leaders and new City Groups will be identified, called, and sent to the front lines of mission. Your coach is here to help you identify, recruit, train, and send different leaders and to shepherd a community toward multiplication. We pray that God will continue to call more to make disciples.

As we pursue God in His Word, treasure Christ and His salvific work, and follow the Spirit as He leads us into ministry and mission, our hope is that God's power will be on display in these beautiful outcomes!

MULTIPLYING CITY GROUPS

As you continue in leadership and, by the grace of God, fruitful ministry and mission occurs, our hope would be that your community would multiply. Multiplication is essential to gospel transformation and also essential for our city to be reached with the gospel. There are some things to consider before you multiply your City Group, however, and we will unpack them below.

WHY MULTIPLICATION?

Multiplication is a critical piece of effectively making disciples and foundational to a movement. However, multiplication of groups can be messy and hard. If it's so hard, then why should we even consider multiplying as a group?

We can find the answer by looking at the early church in Scripture.

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."

Acts 1:8

"And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people.

And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved."

Acts 2:46-47

And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.

Acts 6:7

So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied.

Acts 9:31

But the word of God increased and multiplied.

Acts 12:24

So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and they increased in numbers daily.

Acts 16:5

So the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily.

Acts 19:20

There is no question that the church of God, both in seasons of great triumph and great struggle, must continue to make and multiply disciples through the power of the Spirit in accordance with the Word. Multiplying disciples will naturally lead to multiplying communities and ultimately multiplying churches. Multiplication is the natural outcome of obedience, and movement requires multiplication. It's part of what it means to be the church!

Notice too, that much of the emphasis is on the Word of God multiplying. Multiplication isn't just about numbers it's about the reign and rule of God extending, and His kingdom being established through submission to His Word. We multiply because we want to demonstrate God's kingdom and proclaim the good news to more and more people.

WHEN TO MULTIPLY

There are two primary drivers for when multiplication should happen: mission and leadership.

Multiply for Mission

First you should seriously consider multiplying your City Group when there is a clear opportunity to engage a new pocket of people. Perhaps someone has come to Christ through your City Groups and they have a ton of friends who don't know Jesus, but those friends couldn't possibly participate in your regular rhythms. That's a great time to multiply your group so you can be more effective in mission!

Perhaps a few people in your community have developed a passion for a marginalized group of people, but the

rest of the community is firmly rooted in a neighborhood. That's a great time to consider multiplication as well.

Bottom line, if there is an opportunity presenting itself, God's providence is at work and you should seriously pray and consider what obedience looks like in the face of a new mission opportunity.

Multiply for Leaders

Second, you should consider multiplication when a clear new leaders emerge. You'll know these kinds of people because they're pressing for more involvement or they naturally step into positions of responsibility. Often they are the ones who are rallying both believers and the lost to be a part of a community.

An emerging leader may not have a clear sense of mission, which you can help them with, but more often than not they need to be challenged to step out and lead. Step one for them should be leadership experience within your City Group. They may not have the title of City Group leader yet but they can certainly practice leading!

One pastor we know often says that "reluctant leaders often make the best leaders," and we tend to agree with him. This person may not be immediately excited about leadership, but often these kinds of leaders make the most faithful and best leaders for City Group.

Do you want a resource with specific launch timelines?

Check out the **6 & 12 Month Launch Tracks** in the Field Guide Appendix.

WHEN NOT TO MULTIPLY

If you cast a vision for multiplication and value it as a group, often times people and communities will want to multiply but perhaps shouldn't. Below are a few common scenarios when that may be the case.

Don't Multiply JUST Because The Group Is Too Large.

Space restrictions are the most common reasons that we come across for groups who have a desire to multiply. The group either can't fit in a living room together or there is an "ideal" group size that they have exceeded. There are a couple problems with this thinking. First, the group is often large because something is going right — the leaders are doing an effective job, there is a strong group of hospitable people, or providentially there was a pocket of people who needed connection. Often times multiplying this type of community will produce a new smaller community that starts strong but ultimately fizzles and dies. Meanwhile the original group will often grow back to its original size, which continues the problem.

Rather than multiplying just to alleviate a size problem, we would encourage leaders to cast the vision for a new opportunity to potentially multiply and work on finding emerging leaders. The critical point to successful multiplication is to avoid convenience and instead to focus on multiplying for mission or a leader.

Don't Multiply If Your Group Is Unhealthy.

Some groups may have a desire to multiply but are very unhealthy. This is another reason that we value assessment — it gives us an opportunity to understand if a group has good DNA and could successfully multiply into another healthy City Group. In our experience, unhealthy groups just multiply unhealthy groups. Before you multiply, do some soul searching and see if your City Group is faithfully committed to practices, values and ultimately the gospel.

Don't Multiply Without A Clear Sense Of Mission For A New Community.

This is probably a derivative of the first point, but we would strongly suggest you not multiply without a clear vision for the lost. This kind of multiplication is often driven around the needs of the community members. "We need to multiply because I can't meet X night." "We need to multiply because I don't 'click' with so-and-so." Whatever the reason, this is more like division than multiplication and in our experience results in more City Groups dying than any other reason for multiplying. It often reveals a consumeristic heart — the response is not to multiply, but to patiently address consumerism with the gospel over time.

HOW TO MULTIPLY

Assess The Health Of Your Group.

Sit down with your CG coach to diagnose if your City Group is ready to multiply.

Identify Leaders For The New City Group.

Identify leaders for the new community that will be forming and ensure they have a clear sense of purpose. We'd strongly urge you to take some time for these new leaders to clarify their vision for mission and help them work through the details and practices in their new community.

Have The Leaders Recruit A Small Core Of People.

Don't just divide up a group along geographic or demographic lines! Have the leaders recruit a core of people who legitimately want to go join in this new mission. You want to ensure whoever is joining from your existing community has said "yes" to join in both the vision and practices of this new community.

Pray.

Pray like crazy together for a season. Pray that God would soften hearts to hear the gospel and that new disciples of Jesus would be made. Consider having a commissioning prayer time with your City Group to send the new core group well. Bottom line: pray, pray, and pray some more!

Launch.

Your first gathering as a new City Group will be both exciting and nerve-racking! You've prepped, planned and prayed. Go into the night with confidence that God will meet you there!

WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO MULTIPLY WELL

As we've multiplied City Groups, here are a few things we've learned along the way:

Recognize The Difficulty.

Multiplying can be tough relationally. Don't shy away from it. Celebrate the relationships that have formed, grieve their change, and move forward in faith that obedience to God's Word is the greatest source of joy.

Take It Slow.

Sometimes multiplication conversations can be months long- that's ok! There is no rush to get a new group launched before it's ready.

Reunite.

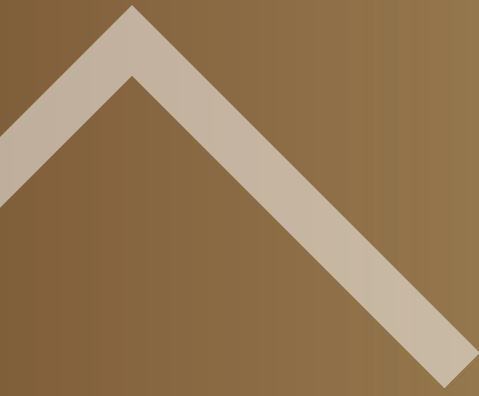
Multiplication isn't a divorce and it doesn't mean you can't have joint gatherings. Regroup after a month or two for a celebration and to reconnect relationally. The task of multiplication isn't complete at launch. You will definitely want to carve out time to circle back around, and debrief the experience, and celebrate together!

Consider Keeping Core Relationships Together

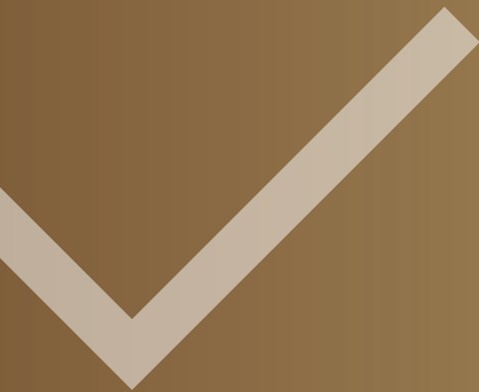
Sometimes the most effective task is to multiply along the lines of Huddles. These strong relational bonds will serve well as the City Group launches.

There's Never A Perfect Time To Multiply.

If you're waiting for "just the right time," then chances are good you'll be waiting until Jesus comes back. The right time to multiply is when there is a leader and a mission, which isn't always convenient.



P



Section Three:

Resources for City Group Leaders

LEADERSHIP FAQ'S

HOW DO I SHARE THE GOSPEL?

While there are many helpful ways to share the good news of Christ with people, we have found three particular ways to be helpful at Providence:

1. Sharing the gospel directly from the Bible
2. The basic facts of the gospel
3. The gospel as the story of Jesus

Below is an overview of each strategy and the basic content included in them.

SHARING THE GOSPEL FROM THE BIBLE

One way to share the good news is to go directly to the Scriptures with someone and explain it from the text. 1 Corinthians 15:1-6 is perhaps the clearest articulation of the gospel of Jesus Christ in all of the Bible, so we use it frequently. In sharing with people, we usually start with reading the text:

¹Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, ²and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. ³For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the

Scriptures, ⁴that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁵and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. ⁶Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep.

1 Corinthians 15:1-6

After reading the text, we have found it helpful to point out the following observations about the gospel from the text:

1. The past, present, and future dimensions of the gospel – verses 1 and 2
2. The primacy of the gospel – verse 3
3. The facts of the gospel – verses 3-6

This has been an important way to present the gospel to those who are already believers but don't yet have a clear understanding of it. It has the additional benefit of pointing out the Bible as the foundational authority on the matter.

THE BASIC FACTS OF THE GOSPEL

The second strategy we often use is the basic facts of the gospel, which are taken from the book "What is the Gospel?" by Greg Gilbert. Briefly, the four main tenets of a gospel presentation answer the following questions::

1. Who is God?
2. Who is man?
3. Who is Christ?
4. How should we respond?

To answer those questions, first talk about God as Creator and God as holy and powerful. Next, talk about humans as created in God's image but rebellious toward God in our sin. Then turn to Christ, who is the God-Man that lived in perfect obedience to God, died an atoning death on the cross, and was raised on the third day in victory over sin, Satan, and death. Then, finally, we should respond to this message with repentance (turning from our sin) and faith (turning toward Christ).

THE STORY OF JESUS

Finally, we use a modification of a Tim Keller strategy that presents the gospel as the story of Jesus. The story follows the basic pattern below:

1. Jesus came into this world as God in flesh.
2. Jesus lived a perfect life that you and I never could have lived because of our sin.

3. Jesus died an atoning death on the cross that we deserved to die to save us from our sin and take the wrath of God for sin upon Himself.
4. Jesus rose from the dead in victory over sin, Satan, and death so that we who would repent and believe might be reconciled back into our relationship with God the Father for eternity.
5. The bad news is that we are more sinful and flawed than we ever dared to believe, and the good news is we are more loved and accepted in Christ than we ever dared to hope. What good news!

This approach can change in tone or emphasis each time you tell the story, but those are the general points that we try to work through.

HOW DO I DEFINE A MISSION?

The first critical piece in answering this question is understanding that the mission of the church is to make disciples of Jesus. Mission is primarily about people, not projects! We do mission through the demonstration and declaration of the gospel to people with real names, real lives, and real stories.

People live individual lives and, as the question above implies, it can be really hard to nail down who you are going to invest in. A pocket of people is probably best defined as a network of relationships that people have in common (through a workplace, a particular affinity like CrossFit, their kids' school, etc.) or a neighborhood (a shared geographic space where life tends to happen).

One way to think about mission is to proactively pursue relationships in your spheres of influence (neighborhood, school, work) while reactively pursuing mission as the Spirit seems to lead and provide opportunities. This allows for intentionally focusing much of the community's proactive time together on a specific neighborhood or network, while also giving time to react to different people and needs as they arise.

A City Group implements t's practices so that people from their networks can participate but, reactively, must go out of their way to love and serve anyone who has need in the city.

IDENTIFYING NAMES AND OVERLAP

As you start a new City Group, rather than simply arbitrarily choosing a mission, we would recommend spending a lot of time focusing on names of people that your core team already knows. One helpful way to do this is to have every person in the City Group do this:

1. Create a chart with two columns.
2. In the first column, write out the twelve people you spend the most time with.
3. In the second column, write whether they are following Jesus or not.

Those who are following Jesus are your primary community, and those who are not following Jesus are your mission. If a newly forming community has each participant do this exercise, look for overlaps in those lists. That will help you figure out whom to focus your time and energy pursuing. Your mission as a community will be to focus your time on whatever the common thread is that holds those relationships together.

If there isn't any overlap in relationships, think of places and ways that you can begin to integrate your lists together over time. How can you naturally involve those believers in your group with folks who aren't yet following Jesus on a regular basis?

TEAMS OF MISSIONARIES VS. MISSIONARY TEAMS

Lastly, most City Groups will begin more along the lines of a team of missionaries and transition to a missionary team over time. Generally speaking, because we live in such an individualistic culture, true pockets of people can be hard to come by. Start with people who live, work, or play in generally the same place and have a passion to make disciples, cultivate a loving community, and start looking for ways to overlap relationships that you already have. Also, you can start with folks around you who have an interest in Jesus but aren't yet followers.

HOW DO I FACE DISCOURAGEMENT?

Discouragement is common for leaders. Some group members don't show up to group. Some don't follow through. Some don't participate in prayer. If you are experiencing this sort of discouragement, we encourage you to work through these steps:

Ask yourself if you are abiding in Christ. Are you spending daily time in the Word? Are you communing with God in prayer? Are you practicing confession and repentance regularly? Are you trusting that your identity and worth comes from being a son or daughter of Christ and not through your leadership?

Ask yourself if you are fulfilling your role as a leader. Are you loving people? Are you meeting with them outside of group? Are you in contact with your CG coach? Are you delegating responsibilities? Why or why not? Is a deeper issue the problem? If you are not fulfilling your

role, we would love to help equip you where you feel weak. Please let us know.

Make sure you have realistic expectations. Disciples grow slowly, and there is a tendency to care more about the group than the people in the group. Don't be surprised if it takes years to see people grow in an area of sin. Don't be surprised if some people remain apathetic for long periods of time.

Know that the Lord is pleased in your faithfulness. Jesus' disciples grew slowly and failed in major areas (consider Peter). The Lord is after your faithfulness, so do not judge things by how fast your group grows but by whether or not you are being faithful.

If you are struggling with discouragement, please let a CG coach, staff member, or an elder know so they can pray for you and help.

INTERPERSONAL AND GROUP DYNAMICS FAQ'S

HOW DO I INTERACT WITH GROUP MEMBERS?

We all take time, attention, and relationships for granted when we are focused on our schedules, our desires, and ourselves. But leading others to Jesus requires that we train ourselves to listen actively and to be other-minded.

LISTEN ACTIVELY

- Put down your phone
- Focus on what they are saying, not what you are going to say next.
- Make eye contact.
- Ask questions to clarify confusion.
- Keep paying attention.
- Affirm what the individual is saying.

We can half-heartedly listen to people, trying to beat them to the punch on the next point, or we can listen to people in a way that they feel heard. This is a service you can give your brother or sister. Don't be in a hurry. Resist the urge to assume motives and thoughts in conversations.

BE OTHER-MINDED

The New Testament is full of "one-another" commands that call for Christians to proactively love, care for, and serve one another with a mind toward our common hope. But to be other-minded means that we take our minds off ourselves, and this is a struggle for many.

- Ask questions, big and small.
- Wait to hear the answer.
- Consider the social dynamics of individuals in your group and minister by helping introduce or engage them.
- Treat each other as close family, looking to each other's needs.

Showing genuine care for people takes time and intentionality. Your character and attitude set the tone for your group. Therefore, how you interact with them is vital. Be honest. Be genuine.

Do you want a resource for interacting with people on Sunday Mornings?

Check out **Guide To Sunday Mornings** in the Field Guide Appendix.

WHAT IF SOMEONE TALKS TOO MUCH?

Almost every group has that person who likes to talk. What they say is often good and helpful, but they don't leave enough time for others to join the conversation. Here are some ways to help you deal with these individuals:

- Remember God's patience with you. He's listened to every word you've ever said to Him. He hears our long-winded prayers and answers with grace.
- Call on people specifically by name during group and aim to include everyone. This approach diffuses the probability of one person taking up the time.

Encourage those who are timid to share and those who dominate discussion to measure their words. If someone continues to talk excessively, have a conversation with that person outside of group time. Remember these things when you talk to them:

- Seek first to encourage and bless this person. Thank them for their contributions to group time, encouraging their insights with specificity. Confirm their desire to speak as valuable but reinforce an economy of words that allows everyone to share.

- Get personal with them. Encourage them to share in depth in more intimate settings and relationships. Be sure to give them an opportunity to respond to what you've said and pray with them.
- Watch the next few weeks of group time. Remember to be patient and make sure they are still contributing to the group. It is possible their reaction will be to shut down and not say much at all. Encourage them in who the Lord has made them to be and remind them that He put them in this group and delights in their contribution.

WHAT IF SOMEONE DRAINS THE GROUP?

A draining person is self-focused and your job is to constantly point them back to Christ, encouraging them to get their eyes off themselves and their circumstances. As a shepherd, you must protect your flock and engage this person if you see this leech-style behavior. This type of person often "fishes" for people's attention and affirmation, possibly playing the victim.

These individuals need to be taught what love is and what it looks like within a healthy, gospel-centered community. Christ has called us to love in this one-sided relationship just the way He did.

It's easy to want to be a savior to the needy in your group. Paul David Tripp uses these questions to assess your heart in providing care:

- Do you exhibit sadness rather than joy when you think about them?
- Are you tempted to feel angry with this person when they don't change?
- Do you become critical when you think about them? Self-righteous that they haven't changed?
- Do you gossip about them?
- Do you become cynical and lose faith in God that they will ever change?
- Are you impatient with them?

If you answered "yes" to any of these, reassess your motive in providing care. Remember, you are not and cannot be anyone's savior. Once you and your group realize this and rest in God's sovereign purpose, they will become less of a drain. Some individuals need specialized care, so you may suggest biblical counseling or recovery programs in addition to your group. Contact a CG coach or a pastor to discuss how you can move forward.

WHAT IF SOMEONE IS INCONSISTENT IN ATTENDANCE?

It can be frustrating and difficult when members of your group do not show up to group gatherings. When this happens, begin the conversation by asking rather than assuming. Our hearts are quicker to assign motives than to seek truth; so ask first.

When the conversation begins, the following steps will help you shepherd inconsistent members:

1. Confess and repent of wrong attitudes or thoughts that you have in your own heart, whether toward attendance in general or a specific person in your group (Matthew 7:1-5).
2. Everyone has a reason for not committing. It does not justify the inconsistency, but it should elicit compassionate and patient love (1 Corinthians 8:4-8).
3. Figure out why the individual has been inconsistent. Here are potential questions to ask:
 - How can I pray for and encourage you during this time?
 - What's been going on in your life?
 - What are your expectations for the group?
 - Why have you been so busy?
 - What do you consider your priorities?

4. Encourage the individual with truths from God's Word about the importance of community and commitment (Matthew 22:37-38; Hebrews 3:12-13; 10:23-25).

If the individual proves unwilling to learn or change, give them the freedom to leave the group and re-communicate your expectations. However, if the individual is an unbeliever, consider extending the invitation despite the inconsistency.

WHAT IF SOMEONE DOESN'T SEEM TO CARE?

As a group leader, you will sometimes deal with group members who just don't seem to care. Here are a few ways for you to encourage those who are apathetic:

- Know their story. Encourage your group to pursue and get to know them. Discern why they're indifferent. Is something weighing them down? Are they a new believer? Have they been wounded? Are they fearful of opening up? Ask the Lord to give you wisdom.
- Encourage them to serve the group, even in a small way. Ask them to bring food for your family meal or send out prayer requests. Involvement can be encouraging and motivating.
- Be patient and give them time to adjust to the culture and personality of your group
- Set up a time to have a conversation with them. Explain your concern and remind them of what they're missing by not contributing and being involved in the group (1 Corinthians 12; Romans 12)

Most importantly, make Jesus look beautiful. You cannot force people to care more. Pray for them and shepherd your group so that the love of Jesus is on display (John 17). Comfort them as you've

been comforted (2 Corinthians 1). Worship Jesus, talk about Jesus, pray to Jesus, and trust that He will move in their heart.

GROUP PRACTICES FAQ'S

HOW DO WE DO BAPTISMS?

At Providence, we conduct baptisms in two ways.

CORPORATE BAPTISM

Our primary way of baptizing believers is corporate baptism. As a corporate church, we baptize believers at our Sunday Gatherings or Worship Nights. For more information on baptisms and the required baptism process, please reach out to someone on staff.

We typically will conduct baptisms twice per year during a Sunday Gathering or Worship Night. As well as at our annual Citylight Summer Baptism Celebration.

BAPTISM IN CITY GROUPS

Another way people have been baptized at Providence is in a small setting with their City Group. While this is not our preferred method of baptism, sometimes circumstances necessitate an adjustment. We so require anyone getting baptized in their City Group to meet with a baptism mentor and go through the baptism booklet. If someone in your City Group would like to be baptized, contact a CG coach or staff member and they can help you work through next steps.

For a complete explanation of the theology and practice of baptism at Providence, consult the **Baptism Booklet** in the Field Guide Appendix.

HOW DO WE PRACTICE COMMUNION?

Corporately, we partake in communion during every Sunday Gathering. In addition to these corporate environments, there may be times your City Group would like to take communion together.

WHAT IS COMMUNION?

The ordinance of communion is an ancient act of worship that Christ instituted 2,000 years ago for His church. It's a visible sermon to our own souls of the concrete promises of God obtained for us by Jesus's death and resurrection. The ordinance of communion, or the Lord's Supper, was instituted by Jesus in Luke 17 and other places throughout the gospels. Additionally, the apostle Paul instructs the church on the nature of this ordinance in 1 Corinthians 11:23-32. The Bible is clear about the mandate for the church to practice the ordinance of communion regularly, and also that the ordinance is specifically for those who have submitted their lives to Jesus as Lord and Savior.

With respect to a City Group, it is a great opportunity to let lost people who have joined your group know that they still must make the commitment to Christ. In Jesus's ministry, He had the large group that anybody could join, but from time to time He brought them to critical decision points (Luke 9:57-62; 18:18-24; John 6:52-66). This gave them the important gift of knowing that they weren't part of Jesus simply because they liked being

in the large group. They still had a major decision to make about Him. Communion is a similar way to have a decisive conversation with someone who doesn't yet follow Jesus, as the Lord's Table is only for those who have trusted in Christ.

COMMUNION IN PRACTICE

In the earliest practices of the church, our brothers and sisters in Christ celebrated communion with a meal as the centerpiece. Early in the meal, they gave thanks and broke the bread to initiate the meal, and to conclude they would raise the cup and remind one another of Christ's shed blood. In between was conversation and reflection centered on Jesus and His finished work. We have tried to include this in our regular gatherings to reinforce that the communion is at the heart of Christian discipleship.

For guidelines to practicing communion, first look to the Scriptures in 1 Corinthians 11:23-29:

For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself.

When only believers are present a family meal, go ahead and break bread at the beginning, reminding those at the table of the truths covered. Spend some time in simple, quiet reflection and allow people the opportunity to discern if there is anything that must be repented of or division that exists in the community before you eat. Similarly, after you have had some good conversation, at the conclusion of the meal, gather some wine and remind the community of what Paul tells us about the cup.

If there are people there who don't yet know Jesus and you still want to practice communion, we would suggest that you do the bread and the cup altogether in one period of time, generally after the meal. You can say something to the effect of, "Communion is something that Christians do. It's not really for people who are still making up their minds about Jesus. It's for people who have staked their whole hope on Him and have said, 'I'm all in for Jesus.' If you are still undecided about Jesus, we're glad you're here and you're completely welcome, but please pass the bread and cup without taking it. It's not a slight or judgment on you, but something we hold dear." Make sure they know that it's not weird or a big deal that they are just there to watch during this short time!

Either way, pray or have multiple people pray and thank God for the enormous reality behind the bread and the cup. Thank God for all the blessings that come from the cross – for example, salvation, reconciliation, a living hope, freedom to love God, eternal life, a promised resurrection, hope of purpose in suffering, and other things. Finally, we have found that it is important to transition people out of a time of reflection and worship, so make sure after you've prayed that you give a next step – whether it's inviting people to wash up the dishes, or go grab the kids, or something else. Having a plan is helpful!

HOW DO WE HANDLE KIDS IN A CITY GROUP?

FAMILY GATHERINGS AND KIDS

Kids can present some interesting challenges when it comes to doing life together. If you are primarily gathering around the event of a Bible study, then more often than not you're going to want to keep the kids separate. But that's not the primary purpose of the City Group family gathering — it's to be obedient to Jesus in acting like a family.

With that in mind, and a meal at the center of what we do, we would strongly encourage you to integrate children into this time. First, it presents the opportunity for them to see and hear other people's stories of following Jesus, both the good and the bad. Second, it helps them see that they are part of a community that knows, loves, and serves one another frequently. Third, children learn to relate to people of all different ages and life-stages and are presented with examples of faithfulness that will equip them well for the future. Finally, it's just a whole lot of fun having a mess of kids running around for dinner!

HOW DOES IT WORK?

As far as involving kids in the family meal, there are two strategies that we have employed. The first is to keep them involved in everything we do — from prayer, to eating, and all the way to cleaning up. We think it's a great way

for our children to learn what it looks like to have healthy, Jesus-centered relationships, and we get to learn things about the Lord from their struggles and successes throughout the week.

The second strategy is actually feeding the kids all together at a different time. I really like this strategy, especially with kids of a similar age. Kids really only hate the "kids table" when they are old enough to understand adults! Often we will set the kids up at a table outside, serve them dinner together, and let them make an absolute mess of themselves while we are inside preparing. It's been fun to watch as occasionally the conversation will turn to more important things than what kids typically talk about. While the adults are eating, the kids can play in the backyard if it is nice outside, or downstairs in the basement if not. It gives the adults a chance to focus on conversations that will last a little longer than 30 seconds.

However, when transitioning into more of a discussion based setting we encourage City Group leaders to implement some sort of babysitting. That could be hiring a high school or college student to come look after the kiddos. Or it may look like the parents rotating through a schedule and taking turns on kid duty.

While it is the parents' primary responsibility to make sure the kiddos

are cared for, don't hesitate to invite non parents to contribute financially or take a turn to help watch the kids!

Family gatherings are typically involved affairs, lasting for a couple hours. We have found that in order for the family meal to be successful with children, you need to give it plenty of time. Don't expect to have any sort of joy in the evening if you're trying to cram food down your throat while feeding your kids so you can get out of there in an hour. Take some time as a family, enjoy one another and the mess the kids are making, and joyfully clean it up when you're done!

WHEN DO YOU DO IT?

Especially for young families, we have found that weeknights are absolutely insane. Whether it's sports, community involvement, date night, or something else that comes up, weeknights are a really difficult time to accomplish a healthy gathering. Specifically for a City Group with lots of families involved, we have found that Sunday afternoons or evenings are quite possibly the best time to practice this kind of gathering. Most people are available during this time, and you have plenty of time generally on either side of the gathering to prepare and clean up. Lastly, most of your neighbors rarely have regular appointments on Sunday afternoons, so they may just be interested in coming for dinner!

Other rhythms to consider are an every-other week family gathering. Many "family City Groups" have a normal rhythm of every other week, and have found that it has pressed them to be more intentional in forming Huddles and gives more space

to practice Third Place. Don't wear yourself out trying to pull off an event. The point is to act like a family and enjoy one another!

HUDDLES AND KIDS

When it comes to meeting and managing children, Huddles are probably the hardest to facilitate when it comes to thinking about child involvement. Huddles are designed to be a place where we can gather, and hold one another accountable to obedience as disciples. They are single-gendered groups with two to five people and last generally for an hour. The most critical piece to making Huddles work is valuing them enough to commit to them as much as possible. On a weekly basis, we need accountability to connect with God, reflect on life, and participate in mission. Practically speaking that's just a lot harder to do with littles crawling all over you, snacks spilling everywhere, and someone coming in crying every 20 minutes.

We believe it communicates a lot to our children when we explain to them what we do in a Huddle and why we are committed to participating in one. We love them a lot but we love God even more. If you faithfully practice this, you will model well for your children that you must have some time and space in your calendar to study the Bible, continue to confess and repent of sin, and intentionally consider opportunities and pray by name for those who don't know Jesus. Like Jesus, it's important that we model time alone and time with others as crucial to the submitted life.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

The easiest solution for this is to alternate between husband and wife taking care of the kids to find particular portions of the day where child care is easiest. For you that may be early in the morning, it might be in the afternoon during nap time or maybe it's after you've put the kids down to bed.

WHEN DO YOU DO IT?

Consider alternating weeks in the evenings after the kids are in bed. One week the guys meet and the next week the ladies meet. Bottom line, find a regular time in your schedule when children are a little easier to accommodate, and then go for it!

THIRD PLACE AND KIDS

When it comes to gathering for community, most groups try hard to accommodate children in some way. In my experience, however, when it comes to mission, most groups give up at the outset of the conversation. The thought of getting multiple families with multiple children in the same place to accomplish anything together is far too overwhelming of a task. Part of that mentality is from real challenges – it's hard to involve kids! Part of that mentality, though, is still rooted in event-based thinking and needs to be challenged.

The objective of a regular third place is to involve your non-believing friends with the life of your community. It's less about "where" and more about "what." One way you might consider practicing this with children is through the phrase "mission is to your kids and through your

kids." Mission is to your kids, in that you have a responsibility to make disciples of them, and mission is through your kids in that oftentimes your rhythms as a family are oriented around kids' activities.

Perhaps the most effective way to think through a third place with kids of any age is to ask the questions, "What are my children already doing?" and "How can I involve my believing friends in those activities?"

Rather than adding something new to your calendar, instead try thinking through how you can intentionally do something that is already on the calendar with someone who loves Jesus and someone who doesn't yet know Christ!

HOW DOES IT WORK?

Here are a few examples of third places that have been done with kids involved and also without:

- Intentionally coaching a soccer team where two other families from our community participated in a YMCA league. We were able to serve a single mom who desperately needed some short-term care for her daughter. And our service wound up contributing to her re-engaging with another local church.
- Gathering weekly at our neighborhood park with our kids and one other mom with kids. There were already ladies that met there with children, and we were able to have great conversations that led to three of them coming to faith in Christ.

- My house and our neighbor's house. Our neighbors don't know Jesus but always open their home, so we almost always intentionally invite a member of our community to join us when they invite us over. Our house is always open for business as well, with kids in and out all the time!
- Wednesday nights: we used to alternate with the women taking a week and the men taking a week to go to a restaurant to hang out and talk about life. It didn't yield much fruit, but it sure was fun!

Regardless of when or where it happens, the critical point is to involve your kids, other believing families, and those who don't know Jesus in something together.

WHEN DO YOU DO IT?

Effective third places take into account not only your rhythms of life, but also the rhythms of the people with whom you are trying to engage. Most suburban life with children happens around a school calendar, so we use that as a guide. If folks are busy, we get busy with them. If it's a slow season like the summer, we slow down with them. Practically, weekend evenings tend to be the time when most families have availability, so do your best to incorporate Saturday and Sunday evenings into your rhythms of mission.

Resources

Providence KIDS Teaching Videos on YouTube.

Providence KIDS Worship Playlist on YouTube.

Listener KIDS on YouTube.

Lifetree Kids on YouTube,

HOW DO WE HANDLE THE SUMMER?

Summertime always prompts images of grilling in the backyard, vacation road trips, watching baseball, and adventures in the neighborhood. In some churches, it's often a season where people "take a break" from ministry and community. We've always found that idea somewhat odd when we consider our identity in Christ. We don't really ever "take a break" for an entire season from our earthly family, so why would we skip out on our spiritual family for three months?

Our family rhythm certainly changes in the summer, but it doesn't disappear entirely. The kids are out of school, and we're on the go more, but we don't stop teaching our kids about Jesus and His Word. We certainly don't cease to be brothers and sisters in Christ with our church family during the summer either. What if your community continued striving to be a spiritual family over the summer, rather than pushing pause?

In our experience, there are a few things that will help a community thrive in a season where many fade away. Here are three ideas to consider implementing:

GATHER IN NEW WAYS

Because summer is a new season where rhythms change, take the opportunity to change up your gathering. Instead of the regular weekly routine, try gathering on Friday evenings for a BBQ on the deck and some low-key conversation. If you have

younger kids, let them have a sleepover and stay up way too late while the adults enjoy some conversation outside.

Summer is also a great time to connect your community with those who don't know Jesus. Try gathering at the park or the pool, and intentionally have folks invite their neighbors. We call this a "third place", and it's our primary way of engaging in God's mission with our community.

STUDY SOMETHING NEW, AND IN A NEW WAY

Because of vacation schedules and other events, most people will end up attending a group, on average, six times over the summer. The flow of a group will inevitably be interrupted. Rather than trying to have a cohesive study plan that requires consistent participation and builds week-to-week, try something that is a little more self-paced.

We'd recommend encouraging people to be diligent in their personal Bible study and using that as discussion material. Focus on questions like, "What was the most helpful thing you learned?" and "How did this change the way you interacted with Jesus, your family, friends, or neighbors this week?"

Summer is also a great time to incorporate the use of digital technology to help foster conversation. Rather than depending entirely on the face-to-face gathering, try having an ongoing discussion through group chats. Send pictures or videos to help stay connected with your spiritual family even in a season of sporadic in person time.

VACATION TOGETHER

This one requires planning, but it's the best thing my community does – we enjoy vacation with one another. We've done it a number of ways – going to a lake house, road tripping to the mountains, and going camping together. Having our entire families interacting and creating memories with one another fosters such unique and authentic community that it's compelling for our neighbors who don't know Jesus. A week of community vacation also presents an opportunity for more intentional discussion time, as well as much more informal time for sharing life and dreaming about the future of your community. You can do so much more in one focused week than you can in an entire semester's worth of group gatherings!

ENJOY YOUR SUMMER TO THE GLORY OF GOD

Summer is a hard time to start new things, but it's a great time to adapt a lot of your existing practices to the challenges of a summer rhythms. Most important, though, is to rejoice in this season that God has graciously given for His glory and our good. Summer is a blessing to be enjoyed and an opportunity to change up your normal rhythms.

SHEPHERDING FAQ'S

HOW DO I ENCOURAGE CONFESSION AND REPENTANCE?

God uses confession and repentance to bring our sinful minds, hearts, and actions back to Himself every day. We continuously walk away from Him in our thoughtlessness and rebellion, yet these gifts allow us to move forward to follow Christ.

HOW TO ENCOURAGE CONFESSION:

- Model it through your own vulnerability and admittance of your need for grace.
- Make time for it during City Group and encourage it heavily in Huddles
- Guard it so that people are careful with the way they confess, keeping the focus on Jesus and not sin.
- Don't stop at confession. Let confession lead to repentance and joy.

WHAT CONFESSION IS:

- It is agreeing with God and admitting that we don't know best (Proverbs. 3:5-8).
- It goes beyond our actions and words to the heart (Romans 10:10).
- It is about following Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5).

- It involves the community (James 5:16).

WHAT CONFESSION IS NOT:

- It is not merely listing our sins out before a priest or a friend.
- It is not primarily about sin and our bad decisions.
- It is not generally admitting that we are sinful.

HOW TO ENCOURAGE REPENTANCE:

- Model it.
- Teach the basic truths of repentance (see below)
- Pray for repentance in your group.

WHAT REPENTANCE IS:

- Rejecting sin and turning to God's transforming love (2 Corinthians 7:9-10; Revelation 3:19).
- Turning away from sin and self to the gospel and God (Romans 2:4)
- Turning from commitment to sin to commitment to God's kingdom (Matthew 4:17).

- Turning to God in a way that affects our lives deeply (Matthew 3:8).
- Pursuing godly sorrow rather than a worldly sorrow (2 Corinthians 7:9-10).
- Running to God with our shame rather than running away (2 Peter 3:9).

WHAT REPENTANCE IS NOT:

- Feeling bad about something because we think God is mad at us.
- Trying to dissect sin and understand it completely.
- Trying to stop a behavior without addressing the heart issue behind it.

HOW DO I GIVE GODLY COUNSEL?

When listening to someone in order to respond with gospel-centered and Bible-based counsel, there is a progression of logic and action that is important to follow.

These steps will help you care and counsel well when you are faced with a hard conversation or the need to suffer with someone in need.

LOVE

God is love, so we are to love others. To disciple with a Christ-centered love, consider these points:

- **There must be a desire to help.** Our desire reveals whether we have a kingdom mindset or worldly one. If we help others for our own benefit, even if what we are doing is good, it reveals our self-centeredness. If we help others for their benefit, it starves our self-centeredness. One is an incorrect gospel application, the other is a biblical command to love God with all you are and love others as you love yourself.
- **Offer your full attention.** How will we know what to say if we have not heard their story? Be fully present and listen. Hearing will allow you to know what biblical counsel to give, which direction to take moving forward, and how to intercede for others.

- **We must show compassion.** In Hebrews, the author portrays Jesus as one who sympathizes with our weaknesses and is able to help because He suffered and was tempted in every way. No human can ever fully understand another, but we do strive to emulate the example of Christ in our laboring to understand the struggles and suffering of others.

DISCERN

It is helpful to hear how an individual defines problems and struggles. It is tempting to jump in and either define the problem yourself or correct the definition of the problem without fully hearing the story. Does this situation sound familiar?

“I have this issue with my neck, it hurts when I—”

“Oh, I know exactly what you’re talking about. I have a pain in my neck too. Here’s what you need to do ...”

A tendency to be aware of is that we often quit discerning the moment we see a point to relate to. The mind works to remove dissonance and, in trying to understand someone else’s struggle, we try to compare it to our own experience and then attribute all our thoughts and experiences with that issue to theirs.

Over time, carefully and graciously help individuals look at their hurts and struggles in light of Scripture. This approach will help bring fertile ground and a willing spirit to how they are thinking, feeling, and behaving in response to their struggle or suffering.

As this approach progresses, the person being disciplined will begin to view and discuss their troubles through the lenses of God's Word. With this, the individual's thinking, feeling and behaving are, in turn, filtered through truth rather than circumstances, sufferings, or problems. This progression frees the disciple to see his or her problems in relation to the affections of the heart, which is where Jesus says the things that defile us come from.

In and among suffering, affections will be exposed as either affections for self or affections for Christ. These misplaced affections will constantly point to deeper heart issues.

IDENTIFY BIBLICAL SOLUTIONS

Through hearing and discerning, we look to Scripture that speaks adequately to the heart and circumstance.

If discernment toward the heart is skipped and you jump straight into biblical solutions, there becomes a danger of behavior being addressed without true heart change that comes through the Holy Spirit as God's Word impacts the heart. This may seem like a small thing, but biblical solutions apart from understanding where affections of the heart have gone

wrong lead to legalism. The Pharisees and the Sadducees displayed these displaced affections as they consistently approached problems through the law with hearts that were far from the Lord.

EXHORT BIBLICAL ENDEAVOR

Once biblical solutions are identified and studied, the disciple maker exhorts the disciple toward biblical pursuit. This includes but is not limited to exhorting the individual to these things:

- **Forsake allegiance to the flesh.** The individual grows in an understanding of how the flesh has traditionally played out but stays keenly aware of the heart issues beneath.
- **Trust in the character of God.** The individual grows in trust in who God is (His power, His love, His independence, etc.) while acknowledging and embracing the deep need to walk in His ways and actively trust in His goodness.
- **Dwell upon the gospel of Jesus Christ.** There becomes a great understanding of what has been secured in and through the gospel of Jesus Christ. Justification, sanctification, and glorification are all realized in Christ and empowered through the Holy Spirit.
- **Identify and refute the voice of the enemy.** The enemy would love to keep you stuck in sin and brokenness. We must identify lies and condemnation, call them what they are, and fight to believe truth.

- **Meditate upon, memorize, and apply the Word of God.** There is an increased hunger for God and desire to know His Word.
- **Seek power and comfort from the Holy Spirit.** A proper view of the Holy Spirit as part of the Godhead is embraced. This means there is a persistent desire to grow in the knowledge of the Spirit, walk in the power of the Spirit, and seek the Spirit in all things.
- **Engage fully in the body of Christ.** A great failure of many believers has been looking outside the body of Christ for care and help. This exposes a great failure of the church to not be a place and people who pursue authentic, biblical Christianity. As the church strives to be an instrument of God to His people, the individual should be encouraged to engage the body of Christ.
- **Wait patiently upon the Lord and His timing.** A failure to trust God is a failure to trust in His sovereignty.

WHEN SHOULD I INVOLVE ELDERS?

God has graciously given elders to the church — they are men called, qualified, and gifted in the office, and specifically have a role in protecting the flock from sin. The reason these men must meet the qualification, “sober-minded,” is precisely because of the complexity and challenge of pastoral situations of discipline. The elders at Providence are highly capable in navigating these complexities, although imperfectly. They are a gift and consider it an honor to support you in your leadership of a City Group.

As a general rule, no matter what role in ministry you have, we would encourage you to ask an elder when you are in doubt about any pastoral situation. Err on the side of oversharing rather than telling too little. We would vastly prefer that something that should have been navigated only between two believers is brought to light and shared with elders instead of risking an undue burden to a saint.

There are times we do not involve others, even elders, in pastoral situations because of fear. It could be a fear of having your leadership under scrutiny, fear of having your sin found out, or fear of the consequences someone you know may receive if their sin is brought to the elders. When these fears are keeping you from involving elders, remind yourself of 1 John 4:18, that God’s perfect love casts out fear. Fear should never be

the basis for how we make decisions in this life. The One who loves you and who loves the person in sin is also the One who runs the world, including the elders the Holy Spirit has set in place over the church. You can trust God without fear no matter what may come.

WHAT SITUATIONS DO ELDERS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT?

We want you to definitely involve elders in these circumstances:

- A member of Providence is in a consistent pattern of unrepentant sin that is contrary to the clear teaching of Scripture and has been addressed by multiple people. This is the pattern outlined biblically in Matthew 18.
- Someone is in gross moral sin that has a significant impact on the lives of others, particularly sexual sin inside the church. This is an issue of wisdom that allows for elders to guide and care for those who have been hurt deeply by sin. It is also motivated by protection of the flock.
- Situations where divorce is being threatened or moved toward. This is deeply complicated pastoral and theological territory. In wisdom, we want elders involved in these kinds of cases.

- Circumstances where we may need legal action — like abuse, endangerment of a minor, or criminal activity. This is a legal issue and we want to involve elders, particularly pastors, in this discussion to ensure that we protect both the people involved and the church legally.
- Situations where you feel very inadequate to handle whatever has been revealed to you. It is not gossip to have conversations where you lack wisdom. In fact, the elders want to help you grow in Christ and in your skill in shepherding. Please ask for help!

These situations apply regardless of what kind of ministry you are doing and who the person is — whether a staff member, partner, attender, counselee, or leader — these guidelines should apply across the board.

WHEN DOES FORMAL CHURCH DISCIPLINE OCCUR?

The church is given to the task of discipleship — conforming people to the image of Christ. In much of our work, we are forming people toward that end by teaching, encouraging, shepherding, and mobilizing. This is the work of formative discipleship. In certain circumstances, the church also corrects people in error. Whether through doctrinal correction, rebuke over sins of omission, or active confrontation of those in persistent sin, the church corrects disciples of Jesus as well. This is corrective church discipline.

Church discipline, as it is popularly known, is part of discipleship that generally is seen as corrective. Corrective discipline must always be seen in the light of discipleship and coupled with other efforts of formative discipleship. With respect to corrective discipline, the church also has some specific instructions as to how it should operate. From Jesus's direct teaching to His disciples, we find a particular set of commands for the church on how to approach a brother who is persisting in open sin:

"If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen

even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them."

Matthew 18:15-20

In this teaching Jesus lays out a clear pattern as to how we are to love a wayward brother or sister:

1. We first lovingly confront an individual alone with evidence of the sin.
2. If the offending brother or sister is clearly in sin and will not repent, we are instructed to come again with two or three together to establish the charge of the offense.
3. If the wayward brother or sister still will not repent, we are to tell it to the church.
4. Finally, if all the previous steps have been faithfully pursued, we are to remove that person from fellowship with the body.

This process is also laid out in several other passages, including 1 Corinthians 5:1-13, 2 Corinthians 2:5-11, Galatians 6:1-5, 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15, and 1 Timothy 5:19-21. At Providence, we believe in the authority and goodness of all of God's Scriptures. That means even with an issue as difficult and painstaking as church discipline, we must seek to put Jesus's commands into practice with all love and wisdom.

The Scriptures make it clear that, apart from Christ, there is no one who lives up to God's standard of righteousness. All of us have fallen into sin and struggle every day against the world, our flesh, and Satan. But the mark of the Christian is a life of genuine repentance.

Also, it is important to point out that, as believers, we cannot have definitive knowledge of someone's standing before God. We only have evidence of the Spirit working, whereas we cannot see the true regeneration of someone's heart. The only guarantee of salvation is perseverance in the faith, and even then we will not know until we are in glory. We do have evidence, however, that the Scriptures give us, of those who are seeking to submit to King Jesus and those who are being hardened.

But if any of us become hardened to repentance, church discipline is the means God uses to bring us back to a place of softness and warmth toward the gospel. By church discipline, we mean a process that begins as simply as a private word between two believers and, if necessary, may progress to the more serious removal of a person

from the fellowship. But because the goal of church discipline is repentance and restoration, we need to look at church discipline as a gift, not as punitive or aimed at retribution.

PRACTICALLY, WHAT SHOULD I DO?

When considering church discipline, follow the steps outlined below:

1. Go to the individual privately and address the situation. Make clear the issue at hand and explain the biblical concerns toward the actions or attitudes in question.
2. If the heart is unrepentant, pray for and plead with the individual.
3. If unrepentance continues, take two or three others with you who can listen and counsel in the conversation (Matthew 18:16).
4. If the counsel of these others, in addition to your own, is disregarded and the heart remains unrepentant, then update your campus elders. The next step is the beginning of formal church discipline.
5. You are not on your own to fight against sin. The church is with you to fight for the joy of those who are blinded by their sin. In the formal church discipline process, individuals are cared for by elders who have experience handling these situations.

WHAT IF SOMEONE IS STRUGGLING WITH TEMPTATION?

Temptation comes both from the outside (Satan, the world) and from the inside (our own deceitful, sinful hearts). It can stem from the love of money, career, social status, emotional dependence, or anxiety and can lead to specific sins like bitterness, sexual lust, or envy.

It is important to remember that temptation itself is not a sin, but entering into that temptation is sin. Entering into temptation takes place when sin becomes enticing and loses its ugliness.

Huddles are the primary space we encourage temptation to be confessed, fought against, and prayed for.

Here are steps to help you shepherd group members struggling with temptation:

1. Listen to their struggles and temptations.
2. Ask questions to determine deeper lies they are being tempted to believe:
 - What are you hoping to gain by giving into the temptation?
 - What do you fear losing if you don't get what you want?
3. Bring the lies to light through truths from Scripture. Point out where they are tempted to make good things ultimate (Matthew 4:1-11; Luke

4:1-13). Bring to light the end goal of sin (Genesis 4:7, James 1:15).

4. Graciously remind them what has been purchased in the cross and resurrection of Christ (1 Peter 1:3-6).
5. Pray with them and make sure they have accountability in their Huddle.
6. Ask about those specific temptations in the future.

WHAT IF SOMEONE IS STRUGGLING WITH PORNOGRAPHY?

Pornography reduces men and women into objects to be consumed for self-focused pleasure. It is a perversion of God's intended design for sex to be within a committed, monogamous, covenant marriage between a man and a woman.

Repeated exposure to and use of pornography physically changes the chemical wiring of our brains and retrains our heart's affections toward perceptions of beauty and attractiveness. The common manifestation of and purposed end in using porn is self-stimulation and masturbation, choosing fantasy over reality.

For both singles and married, the call is holiness, both in sexuality and in dealing with the reality of daily life instead of escaping to fantasy. Pornography taints current and future relationships with unrealistic expectations and frameworks because the work of intimacy in marriage requires and provides more than porn can ever offer.

In confronting the use of pornography, the temptation can be to focus solely on the external manifestations of the addiction. However, in seeking freedom, it is the putting off of sinful actions and desires that must

be kept in focus. The heart must see greater pleasure in Christ and God's way of life than in what porn offers, or else the momentary pleasure will win out over eternal joy.

Pornography is a complex issue. Many times this sexual outlet is triggered by unmet longings or wounds from the past. When people feel like they have no control, like they are insignificant, like they are hopeless, pornography becomes the outlet to cover up the pain. People often need help identifying triggers that need healing. It is likely they will need help from a counselor to address the problem on this level.

Huddles are the primary space we encourage addiction to be confessed, fought against, and prayed for. The level of addiction will direct the course of action in counseling. Use discernment and talk with your CG coach about how to help someone and go after the heart issues at play. Research suggests that cold-turkey abstinence from porn use is a key factor in helping to break the physical cycle built by the addiction.

WHAT IF SOMEONE IS STRUGGLING WITH HOMOSEXUALITY?

Homosexuality is when individuals are attracted to the same sex, embracing and championing what is felt in the attraction as the normal expression and core of their identity. It is a distortion of the relational design between man and woman and this confusion can lead an individual to trust emotions or feelings instead of the Scriptures.

Acting out on homosexual desires, or same-sex attraction, is listed in the Scriptures among immoral acts that are condemned by God (1 Corinthians 6; 1 Timothy 1). It is included in the list of what is known to be in the heart of depraved men and women and should be fought against like any other sin. However, while in secular culture the individual who fully embraces his or her same-sex attraction is celebrated, there is a stigma inside the church that someone who struggles with homosexuality is more sinful than the person who struggles with pornography. Unfortunately both approaches are off. Homosexuality must not be embraced, yet neither must it be especially condemned. We must see it and those who experience its desires as equals with us in their fight against sin as they follow Jesus.

If someone in your group admits to same-sex attraction or to engaging in a homosexual lifestyle or act, there is great opportunity for you to speak the truth of the gospel:

- Listen with love and compassion to understand their struggle and sin.
- Recognize that sexual immorality is sin, regardless of your understanding of the desires. The blood of Christ covers sexual immorality and can rid anyone of shame, guilt, and disgrace. Your actions should convey understanding in the process of growth as a Christian and not that this sin is worse than another.
- Once you have a framework of the current status and nature of the confessed actions or desires, seek help from your coach.
- Encourage the individual to not base their identity in sexual attraction but in being a child of God. Discipleship toward understanding our identity in Christ is pivotal.
- Healthy friendships that model the gospel and grace to someone struggling to understand proper relationships with the same sex are important, so do not draw away from this individual or let them isolate themselves.
- Encourage the individual to pursue biblical counseling. Contact your coach or a pastor for counseling references.

WHAT IF SOMEONE HAS COMMITTED ADULTERY?

The sin of adultery is when one or both spouses break the covenant promise between them to forsake all other options and love the individual they vowed to.

An affair can be emotionally entrusting oneself to and finding delight in someone other than your spouse in a way that is different from normal friendships. However, affairs often take the form of sexual interaction outside of the marriage covenant where one partner finds someone that they think will fulfill their needs, desires, or tastes more than their spouse.

Both emotional and physical affairs are stirred and provoked by the lie of happiness, pleasure, or fulfillment outside of what one's spouse and, ultimately, Christ can provide.

The aftermath of an affair can be devastating. In counseling a group member, remember to:

- Inform your CG coach or a pastor immediately.
- Spend time studying and praying through Exodus 20:14, Matthew 5:31-32, Mark 10:11, and Hebrews 13:4.
- Take time to listen and work through what the hearts of both individuals are telling themselves — either to justify, blame, or console.
- Encourage them to see a biblical counselor to work through the beliefs that led to the affair. Contact your coach or a pastor for counseling references.
- Support the individual or couple as a community. An affair is betrayal. The process of dealing with the pain and hoping to see the marriage restored and grow takes encouragement, love, grace, and community.

WHAT IF SOMEONE IS PURSUING DIVORCE?

Some of the most difficult pastoral cases we have worked through center on the issue of marriage. At Providence Church, the elders are defining our theology of marriage, divorce, and remarriage in a position paper you can obtain through emailing one of them. In all circumstances where divorce is being pursued, we would ask that you involve an elder as soon as you can.

In shepherding through this challenging circumstance, there are two practical things that we would urge you to consistently communicate with the person.

POINT TO GOD'S IDEAL DESIGN FOR MARRIAGE

We want to consider and point to God's ideal for marriage. If you have a couple with a healthy marriage, remind them of the great grace of God toward them for their marriage to be a reflection of the gospel of Christ. Struggling marriage? Remind them the great lengths to which Christ loved His bride, sacrificially laying down His own life. The same goes for those who are considering divorce, impermissible or permissible. What about someone who is divorced? Remind them that God is still a gracious God who can lead them toward living a life that is pleasing to God.

In all circumstances, we want to remind the person of God's gracious

design for marriage to portray Christ's love for the church (Ephesians 5:32-33) and that a marriage bond is meant to be permanent in this life.

In a situation where someone is endangered or unsafe because of abuse you should immediately talk to an elder and help the person move to a place where they feel safe. In these cases DO NOT immediately point to the design for marriage, as that can further hurt someone that is mentally, emotionally, and physically fragile.

CONSIDER HOW TO COMMUNICATE GOOD NEWS NOT BAD NEWS

Pastorally in these situations, it is important to remember that marriage is always an opportunity to remind people of the gospel. This is true because marriage itself reminds people of the gospel. No matter the circumstance, remind them of the good news of the gospel.

Think toward how you can communicate good news even while the situation may seem predominantly grim. You should always speak specifically of the promises of God for the married, for the divorced, for the single, and for the remarried — the promise of God form the common denominator for all, no matter their relational status.

Lastly, teach them to pray for those who have hurt them. In dealing with this topic, there are always situations where someone has been hurt. Prayer is an appropriate response to the pain and the need for wisdom in these situations.

WHAT IF SOMEONE IS STRUGGLING WITH A CRISIS?

As a group leader, you will often encourage and comfort people suffering through afflictions and crises. Here are some steps to take in these situations:

1. Be OK with them not being OK.

Even though it is uncomfortable and people may exhibit theologically incorrect thoughts, the moment of crisis is usually not the moment to correct their theology or try to make them feel better so you will be less uncomfortable. Let the other person process.

2. Be present. Even if you do not know what to do, just being there means a lot.

3. Listen. It is OK for there to be awkward silences and tears. Do not try and break that tension by talking.

4. Speak rightly. Make sure your words are rooted in Scripture (truth and wisdom), focused on God (His sovereignty, Scripture, glory), exalting of Jesus (Christ as Savior, Mediator and sympathetic High Priest), empowered by the Holy Spirit (dependent on God's power to counsel and transform), and full of love (truthful, graceful, empathetic). Avoid the statement, "I completely understand what you are going through."

WHAT IF SOMEONE IS THREATENING SUICIDE?

A suicide threat is a scary situation that unfortunately some leaders will experience. In these kinds of situations, we encourage you to pray and ask the Spirit for wisdom and a calm heart. Practically speaking, there are three levels of suicide threat:

- 1. Low** – thoughts of death but no plan, intent, or behavior
- 2. Moderate** – suicidal thoughts with plan but no intent or behavior
- 3. High** – previous potentially lethal suicide attempt or persistent intentions or rehearsal

To determine the level of intent, ask the person the following questions:

- Do you have a plan? What is your plan?
- How often do you think about ending your life?
- Have you ever attempted suicide before? Explain.
- Have you injured yourself intentionally (such as cutting)?

If the individual is a minor, talk to the parents immediately about their child's suicidal thoughts and plans.

For each level of suicide intent, follow these procedures:

LOW THREAT

- **Step 1:** Discuss symptoms with your group member. Ask him or her to talk about feelings of hopelessness and depression. Listen and respond with empathy and prayer.
- **Step 2:** Give your group member a list of biblical counselors and schedule another meeting with him or her in the next 72 hours.
- **Step 3:** Ask the group member to give you his or her word that they will stay alive and call 911 if there is a threat of harm.

MODERATE THREAT

- **Step 1:** Tell your group member that Providence protocol requires you to call the police. Call 911.
- **Step 2:** Discuss symptoms with your group member. Ask him or her to talk about feelings of hopelessness and depression. Listen and respond with empathy and prayer.
- **Step 3:** Create a suicide prevention plan together and have him or her sign it. Make a copy for yourself and give the original to him or her.
- **Step 4:** Inform your CG coach and a pastor/elder.

HIGH THREAT

- Step 1: Tell your group member that Providence protocol requires you to call the police. Call 911.
- Step 2: Discuss symptoms with your group member. Ask him or her to talk about feelings of hopelessness and depression. Listen and respond with empathy and prayer.
- Step 3: Create a suicide prevention plan together and have him/her sign it. Make a copy for yourself and give the original to him or her.
- Step 4: Accompany your group member to the hospital and ask him/her for phone numbers of family members to call. Have a family member meet you at the hospital.
- Step 5: Inform your CG coach and a pastor.

HOW DO I VISIT SOMEONE IN THE HOSPITAL?

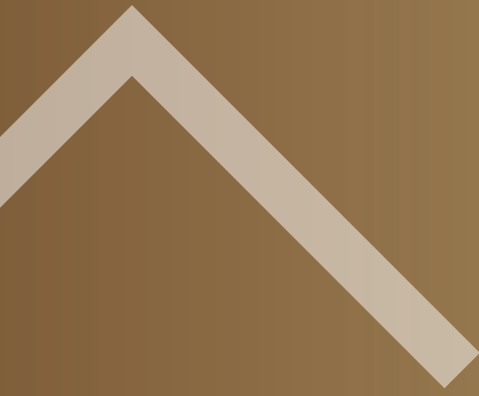
We've all been there. A loved one from our family, friends, or CG winds up in the hospital and we feel the desire to go and visit them. We want to communicate that the person is loved, that we are praying for them, and we want to bless and encourage them. But how do we do that?

Here are some thoughts on how you can use these visits to show love, to encourage, and to demonstrate the gospel to those you are visiting:

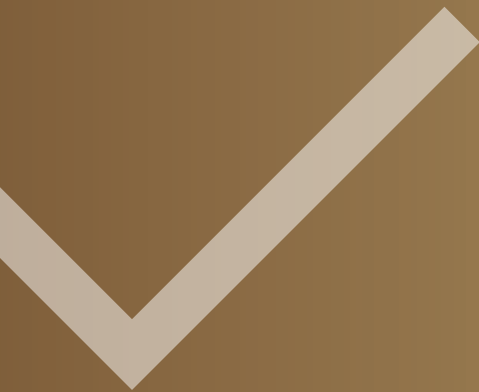
- **Communicate That You're Coming**
 - Patients are put on schedules when admitted into the hospital and those schedules exist to maximize the efficiency of the medical care they receive. You will serve them well by making sure you come at a time that won't interrupt their care.
- **Come in Small Groups** – Hospital rooms are not large. Most rooms can comfortably contain three or four visitors at a time. It is more encouraging for the patient to receive a few visitors multiple times during a hospital stay than to receive 15 people at once.
- **Offer to Bring Something** – If you have the means to pick up a meal, coffee, snack, magazine, or flowers, offer to bring something to the patient or their spouse. A gift from the outside world can be a fun way to bless the people you are visiting.
- **Prepare Your Heart Before Entering**
 - Depending on the conditions you are walking into, you might need to take a moment before entering the hospital room to compose yourself, prepare your heart, pray for the person, or ask the Lord for compassion. Don't ever enter a hospital room expecting a nice, tidy, put-together situation.
- **Be Yourself** – If you are generally a sober, serious friend, don't go all "Patch Adams" on the patient. If you are a jokester, don't be afraid to make the patient laugh. Unless the situation is dire, which it sometimes is, feel free to be yourself and give your friend or family member the best of you.
- **Keep It Brief** – Unless the patient has asked you to stay for an extended period of time, plan to stay for 15-20 minutes.
- **Ask Questions** – It's okay to acknowledge that the patient is in the hospital. Ask questions about the condition, but avoid offering your own diagnosis or critique of the treatment that is being provided. Unless you are a medical professional, they need you to listen—not call into question the work being done by nurses and doctors.

- **Encourage With the Gospel** – After listening to the patient or their family describe the condition and needs, encourage them with the gospel. If the patient or their family is unbelievers, this is a wonderful opportunity to demonstrate a ministry of presence and declare the hope that is rooted in Christ. If they are believers, remind them that God has been and will always be faithful to His people. If you choose, you can encourage them with some scripture. Some relevant passages are Psalm 27, Psalm 42 and 2 Corinthians 4:16-18.
- **Pray With Them** – Before you leave, conclude your time with them in prayer. If they are unbelievers, ask if you may pray for them. Ask if you can lay hands on them and be confident to pray for God to heal them. This is not a magical practice but rather a biblical and personal expression of intercessory prayer.
- **Send a Message** – Follow up your visit with a quick text message or email, affirming your ongoing availability to serve them in any way. Set a reminder in your phone for the next seven days to pray for them. When you pray, message them and let them know that you are doing so.

You have a unique opportunity to minister to people when they are in the hospital. Confidently ask God to provide you with the words to say and a heart that is empathetically and quick to listen. Jesus demonstrated great compassion for the sick during His earthly ministry. It is our privilege to do the same.



P



Section Four:

Appendix

WHAT IS THE GOSPEL

THE ROMANS ROAD

TRIPERSPECTIVAL LEADERSHIP

THE SOAP METHOD

HUDDLES

6 MONTH LAUNCH TRACK

12 MONTH LAUNCH TRACK

GUIDE TO SUNDAY MORNINGS

BAPTISM BOOKLET

WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?

Before time and space existed, God was. God is an eternal being that set all things in motion by the power of His voice. He created the galaxies and the atom. The birds and slugs. The stars and the ocean floors. But at the pinnacle of his creation, He created human beings in his image. All humans without exception were created to bear God's image, be in perfect relationship with him, and experience a joyful life for all eternity.

Yet, all people have chosen to disobey God and follow the passions of our own hearts instead. Not one person has lived up to the command to worship and obey God with our whole life. From the beginning of time, mankind has not wanted to give God glory, but have operated as glory thieves. We strive to make a name for ourself, to prioritize ourself, and to live for ourself. This isn't just someone else's reality, this is our reality. You have sinned and fallen short of God's call on your life. You have fractured your relationship with the God Most High. You have lost your life by attempting to gain it in elements of the world.

But God's love for you could not be hindered by your rebellion. Instead of leaving you broken and hurting, hopeless and lifeless, God made a plan to redeem your life back to Him. While you were still an enemy of God because of your sin and rebellion, God sent His Son Jesus to bring you home. Jesus lived the perfect life that we were called to, yet died on the cross the horrific death that we were headed toward. He faced physical death, but even more, he faced the wrath of God for the sin of His people. Now, if you were to place your trust in Jesus, all your sin may be forgiven and your life may truly begin in Him. There is no other option for a sinful people to find hope and restoration. Our only hope is Jesus alone.

And now, for all who have trusted in Christ, we live a new life that is united to Him. Until we die and see our Lord face-to-face, we live as a people recreated for His glory. If you are in Christ, your life is not your own, you were bought by the blood of Jesus and now live for Him. Chains of addiction can be broken, fear and anxiety can cease, hopelessness can fade away.

We are a people of hope. We are a people of power. We are a people of God.

THE ROMANS ROAD

3:10

EVERYONE HAS SINNED

3:23

WE FALL SHORT OF
GOD'S HOLINESS

5:8

GOD LOVES US AND SENT JESUS

6:23

WE DESERVE DEATH BUT
ARE OFFERED LIFE IN CHRIST

10:9-10

DO YOU BELIEVE IN WHAT JESUS DID ON
THE CROSS AND ARE YOU READY TO ASK
JESUS TO BE YOUR LORD AND SAVIOR?

10:13

WE ARE PART OF GOD'S FAMILY

What is Triperspectival Leadership?

Triperspectivalism is a way to look at the world from multiple perspectives. Triperspectival Leadership is rooted in the fact that throughout history, God has always utilized three offices from which to lead His people: Prophet, Priest and King. The Prophet proclaimed the truth of God to the people. The Priest cared for the people by mediating reconciliation between God and people. The King was to order and advance God's rule among his people so that they would be a signpost of God's reign to the World.

In scripture we see that Jesus perfectly fulfilled each of these three roles.

- He was the true and ultimate prophet who has perfectly revealed God, Himself (Hebrews 1:1-3).
- He was the true and ultimate priest who was offered Himself as the final mediating sacrifice. (Hebrews 9:11-14)
- He was the true and ultimate king who solidified His sovereign rule by securing the coming Kingdom with his sacrificial death and glorious resurrection. (Hebrews 1:5-13; 12:26-29)

God continues to work His mission out through the church. It seems that this leadership paradigm still holds true and is a huge value as we seek to lead communities that truly live on mission with gospel impact.

Why is it important?

Understanding and operating within this paradigm will be helpful for:

1. It will alleviate some of the inherent frustration in leadership.
2. It can shed light on the areas where we need to grow into the fullness of Christ.
3. It creates a communal context for leadership where we really are aware of our need for others.

What am I?

Read Acts 6:1-7. Which of the following resolutions seems most important to you?

- "The hungry widows are now being cared for by the church." (Priest)
- "The Apostles are now freed up to study and preach the Word." (Prophet)
- "Oh look how wonderful! Now we have a structure, everyone knows their roles, and the mission of the church can move forward!" (King)

What are you doing right now?

- Prophet is running bible verses through his head to see if this is legit.
- Priest is thinking about how this information is being received by others.
- King is figuring out how all this works together in your City Group.

PROPHET

Teacher *Head*

Vision
(what & why)

“Bringing God’s truth to people.”

Guard the
Doctrinal Door

KNOWING



Theological
& Biblical
Accuracy

KING

Missionary *Hands*

Organization
(when, where, how)

“Bringing God’s
rule to people.”



DOING

Builds Strategies & Systems

Details & Administration

PRIEST

Shepherd *Heart*

Care
(who)

“Bringing people
to God’s truth.”



BEING

Love & Care for People

Sees Needs & Meets Them





SOAP

When you have your daily time with God, use SOAP to help you think through what you're reading.

Scripture

Pick a book of the Bible and read 1-2 chapters a day. Each day, write out the Bible verse that stood out the most to you.

Observation

What is God saying in this verse? What truth did you learn? Write down your observations, thoughts, or questions.

Application

How can you apply what you learned? What truths do you need to believe? Write down a practical way you can apply this truth

Prayer

Respond to God in prayer. Write down a short prayer thanking God for this truth and ask Him to help you apply it in your life.

EXAMPLE OF SOAP

Scripture: John 15

John 15:5 - "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."

Observation: We don't naturally abide in Jesus so He commands us to abide. Following this command is not burdensome, but actually for our benefit. If we're not connected to Jesus, we can't do anything. Jesus is the true vine and if we abide in Him we will bear fruit. The fruit we bear brings glory to God.

Application: What are ways I can abide in Jesus? Jesus says I will abide in Him if I keep His commandments, but am I actually doing that? Abiding in Jesus allows me to experience the joy that Jesus has for me. I can continue to abide in Him through regularly reading the Bible and prayer.

Prayer: Jesus, thank You for saving me! Please always remind me of how amazing Your Gospel is. I confess that most of the time I would rather do my own thing than abide in You. Teach me more about what it means to abide in You and I pray that abiding in You would result in great fruit for Your glory!

HOW TO USE SOAP IN HUDDLES

Each member of your Huddle will SOAP throughout the week. Then have members share one or two things they heard from God. Ask one another how you are going to obey what God spoke to you.

HUDDLES

WHAT IS A HUDDLE?

A huddle is a gender specific group of 2-5 people that pursues spiritual formation through intimate community.

WHY ARE THEY IMPORTANT?

Huddles embody 2 of the core values at Providence; Formation & Community. They are a unique extension of Sunday Gatherings & City Groups as they provide a more intimate space to commune with God & with others. Huddles also create space for a communal extension/check-in of your personal spiritual disciplines; in other words they provide accountability.

WHAT DO THEY DO?

Although every Huddle's mission is the same, each is unique to the group that makes it up. Because of that, there is no specific curriculum that Huddles follow but rather 3 main categories to help serve as guidelines.

1. Learn & Lean (Luke 11:28)

Share with one another what you have been reading in scripture. Share something you're learning about God (His character, intentions, design, etc.) Talk about how that translates to/impacts your life day to day.

2. Confess & Comfort (1 John 1:9 & James 5:16)

Spend time confessing how you have sinned this past week. Encourage one another to believe and respond to the good news of the gospel.

3. Praise & Pray (James 5:16 & Philippians 4:6)

Talk to God! Thank Him for what He has done and ask Him to intercede.

**See back of page for example discussion questions.*

**Refer to the Huddle Resource Library for ideas on Huddle content*

HUDDLES

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Learn & Lean

- *How have you been challenged by God's word recently?*
- *What's something you're learning about God?*
- *How can you lean into those learnings in the day to day?*
- *How has God revealed himself to you recently?*
- *How have you felt/seen the Holy Spirit move recently?*

Confess & Comfort

- *What are you trusting in besides God?*
- *How have you been resisting God?*
- *What is isolating you from God and other relationships?*
- *How have you battled temptation?*
- *Who are you in conflict with?*
- *How have you been stewarding your time?*

Praise & Pray

- *How have you seen God at work in your life this week?*
- *How can you be praying for each other?*
- *What are you in need of?*
- *What are you thankful to God for?*

6 MONTH LAUNCH TRACK

MONTH 1

WEEK 1- Formation Night: City Groups Primer
WEEK 2- Providence Worship Night
WEEK 3- Formation Night: City Groups Primer
WEEK 4- Formation Night: City Groups Primer

MONTH 2

WEEK 1- Formation Night: Gospel Centered Life
WEEK 2- Providence Worship Night
WEEK 3- Formation Night: Gospel Centered Life
WEEK 4- Community Night: All Together

MONTH 3

WEEK 1- Formation Night: Gospel Centered Life
WEEK 2- Providence Worship Night
WEEK 3- Formation Night: Gospel Centered Life
WEEK 4- Community Night: Men/Women Split

MONTH 4

WEEK 1- Formation Night: Gospel Centered Life
WEEK 2- Providence Worship Night
WEEK 3- Formation Night: Gospel Centered Life
WEEK 4- Community Night: All Together

MONTH 5

WEEK 1- Formation Night: Gospel Centered Life
WEEK 2- Providence Worship Night
WEEK 3- Formation Night: Gospel Centered Life
WEEK 4- Community Night: Men/Women Split

MONTH 6

WEEK 1- Formation Night: Gospel Centered Life
WEEK 2- Providence Worship Night
WEEK 3- Formation Night: Gospel Centered Life
WEEK 4- Community Night: All Together

12 MONTH LAUNCH TRACK

MONTH 1

WEEK 1- Formation Night: City Groups Primer
WEEK 2- Providence Worship Night
WEEK 3- Formation Night: City Groups Primer
WEEK 4- Formation Night: City Groups Primer

MONTH 2

WEEK 1- Formation Night: City Groups Primer
WEEK 2- Providence Worship Night
WEEK 3- Mission Night
WEEK 4- Community Night: All Together

MONTH 3

WEEK 1- Formation Night: Gospel Centered Life
WEEK 2- Providence Worship Night
WEEK 3- Mission Night
WEEK 4- Community Night: Men/Women Split

MONTH 4

WEEK 1- Formation Night: Gospel Centered Life
WEEK 2- Providence Worship Night
WEEK 3- Mission Night
WEEK 4- Community Night: All Together

MONTH 5

WEEK 1- Formation Night: Gospel Centered Life
WEEK 2- Providence Worship Night
WEEK 3- Mission Night
WEEK 4- Community Night: Men/Women Split

MONTH 6

WEEK 1- Formation Night: Gospel Centered Life
WEEK 2- Providence Worship Night
WEEK 3- Mission Night
WEEK 4- Community Night: All Together

MONTH 7

WEEK 1- Formation Night: Gospel Centered Life
WEEK 2- Providence Worship Night
WEEK 3- Mission Night
WEEK 4- Community Night: Men/Women Split

MONTH 8

WEEK 1- Formation Night: Gospel Centered Life
WEEK 2- Providence Worship Night
WEEK 3- Mission Night
WEEK 4- Community Night: All Together

MONTH 9

WEEK 1- Formation Night: Gospel Centered Life
WEEK 2- Providence Worship Night
WEEK 3- Mission Night
WEEK 4- Community Night: Men/Women Split

MONTH 10

WEEK 1- Formation Night: Gospel Centered Life
WEEK 2- Providence Worship Night
WEEK 3- Mission Night
WEEK 4- Community Night: All Together

MONTH 11

WEEK 1- Formation Night: Gospel Centered Life
WEEK 2- Providence Worship Night
WEEK 3- Mission Night
WEEK 4- Community Night: Men/Women Split

MONTH 12

WEEK 1- Formation Night: NEW CONTENT
WEEK 2- Providence Worship Night
WEEK 3- Mission Night
WEEK 4- Community Night: All Together

Sunday Mornings

Sunday mornings are primarily an opportunity for God's people to come to worship God, sit under Biblical teachings and enjoy the sacraments. For many, this is a time of refreshment, conviction and a chance to connect with God. For others, they may be interested in Christianity or looking for community!. Very few people will show up to a church because they have negative reasoning.

They're seeking something outside themselves and we know as Christians that the answer is Jesus. We don't want to miss a single soul or let a person fall through the cracks! We love God, we love people and eternities are at stake.

Head-On a Swivel & Divide and Conquer

On a Sunday morning, we are naturally pulled towards connecting with our friends and family. We walk in and make a B-Line towards the people we know and like to spend time with! Instead, *keep your head on a swivel*, look around, and try to identify the person who is alone. Rather than sitting with others from your City Group, *divide & conquer*. Find a person you don't know to sit next to during the gathering. During meet and greet, ask them for their name, what they do for work, how long they've been coming to Providence and how they got connected!

Snag Their Number

Always be ready to get someone's phone number before they leave. You may not get another chance! Hand them your phone with a contact card open so that you have the ability to text them. Shoot them a text right away to make sure it worked. Then follow up later in the week with a text saying, "So nice meeting you on Sunday!"

We Would Rather Be Overbearing than Underbearing

We want every individual at Providence to feel pursued when they walk through our doors! May it never be said of us that someone came to our church and didn't feel welcomed by the people of Providence. Unfortunately, we often hear stories of people going to a church for the first time and not feeling like people wanted to get to know them. It's unlikely however that we'd hear someone say, "People were so welcoming. I never want to go back there." There's a balance, but we would rather risk being too relational over unwelcoming and cold.

BAPTISM AT PROVIDENCE CHURCH

Thank you for your interest in baptism at Providence Church! Our hope in providing this baptism booklet and in meeting with a baptism mentor is that these tools would help to give you a clear understanding of the theological convictions of Providence Church on the topic of baptism. We have landed on our baptism theology and practice based on what we have read, studied, and unpacked from the Bible.

We must recognize that baptism, while important, is also a secondary theological issue. This means that people can hold different views on baptism, yet still be united as brothers and sisters in Christ. There are several views on baptism held within evangelical Christianity, so we will begin this booklet by offering a statement on baptism:

Providence Church practices believer's baptism by immersion. We believe that baptism is an outward and visible sign of our inward faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Baptism is a means by which the people of God remember and display the life-changing truth of the work of God in Christ in our life.

In the rest of this booklet, we will unpack our view on baptism. We will begin by looking at what baptism is and is not, why a person should be baptized, who should be baptized, when a person should be baptized, how a person should be baptized, and who can baptize a person. We will also talk about why we recommend baptism for membership, what you can expect when you are baptized, and offer more biblical texts and resources on baptism if you would like to do further personal study.

WHAT IS BAPTISM?

Baptism is one of the two ordinances (along with Communion) that Jesus Christ gave as visible signs of His grace to His church. Both Baptism and Communion give a believer the opportunity to remember, reflect on, and rehearse the gospel truth in our lives. Baptism preaches the truth about the person and work of Jesus Christ in a believer's life. Baptism is a response to the person and work of Jesus Christ in our heart and life and it is an outward sign of a person's inward faith. Baptism does not save you, but rather shows what you already believe. It is our public proclamation that we have been saved by the grace of God in Christ.

The mode that we practice is baptism by immersion. The practice that we find throughout the New Testament for baptism is post conversion by immersion into water.

We believe in and practice baptism by immersion after trusting in Jesus as Lord and Savior because in the bible we see baptism as a **Command** from Jesus to follow obediently, a **Symbol** of our union with Christ, and a **Celebration** of Jesus' saving grace in our individual life within the church family.

Baptism is a Command

Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

Matthew 28:18-20

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

Acts 2:38

Baptism is a command given to those who have trusted in Jesus as Lord and Savior. Therefore, baptism is not an option for those who have put their faith in Jesus Christ, but rather baptism is something that should be done by believers as an act of obedience to the commands of scripture. This command allows a believer to make an outward sign or expression of obedience to the inward belief in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Baptism is a Symbol

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

Romans 6:3-5

Having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.

Colossians 2:12

As a symbol, our baptism makes clear several important truths:

- The believer’s union with Christ in His death and resurrection
- The believer’s cleansing and the washing away of sin
- The new life in Christ the believer walks in

Our baptism puts the truth of the gospel on display for all to see. Baptism a clear picture of dying and rising with Jesus Christ and of the washing away of our sins. It is an outward sign of an inward change that happens by faith in Jesus Christ. It shows that we are in Christ and Christ is in us—that we are united with Him. One of the greatest truths of being a Christian is our union with Christ and baptism is a symbol of this truth.

Baptism is a Celebration

For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews and Greeks, slaves or free.

1 Corinthians 12:13

There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Ephesians 4:4-6

Our baptism is not only a symbol of our union with Christ, but also a symbol of union with the body of Christ—the church. If we are in Christ then we are a part of His body, the church. We see that baptism is both an individual act and also communal and familial event in the life of a local church.

Baptism is an individual person publicly declaring that they have trusted in Jesus as Lord and Savior and that they have been made right with God through faith. Because they have trusted Christ, the individual is now a part of the family of God. Baptism is also communal and familial because the local church performing the baptism is affirming an individual's profession of faith and encouraging them to be baptized within the context of this local church body.

As a church family, we celebrate baptism because each baptism is a story of the grace of the gospel working in a person's life. Each baptism reflects a story of heart and life change—a person who was once dead who has now been made alive in Christ. We will always celebrate stories of the gospel saving, sustaining, and transforming people's hearts and lives!

What Baptism is Not

As we talk about what baptism is as a Command, Symbol, and Celebration, it is also important for us to talk about what baptism is not and what it does not do:

- **Baptism does not save you.**
Scripture is clear that salvation is a gift of grace. We are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:8-9). Baptism is an outward sign of an inward faith. Baptism displays what God has already done in your heart.
- **Baptism is not necessary for salvation.** While a believer should seek to be obedient to the command of Christ to be baptized as a response to the person and work of Jesus Christ in your life, baptism is not necessary for salvation and does not move you to some “higher” or “better” form of Christianity. Once again, we are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ and your baptism is an outward sign of an inward faith.
- **Baptism is not for perfect people.**
You don't have to clean yourself up or conquer all of your sin and struggles in order to be baptized. We do not “arrive” in this life and our lives as Christians are lives of continually be formed as we are a people of process, growth, and change throughout our lives. There is not a standard that has to be met. You simply have had to of trust in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior to be baptized.

WHY SHOULD I BE BAPTIZED?

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

Matthew 28:18–20

Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" 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. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself." And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation." So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

Acts 2:37–41

In light of looking at what baptism is and is not, that leads us to answer the question of why should a person be baptized? Here are three reasons to be baptized:

- To **obey** the commands of Christ in the New Testament
- To **follow** Christ's example in being baptized
- To **show** that I am a follower and disciple of Christ

Baptism is not merely a responsibility in the life of a believer, but rather it is also a privilege in the life of a believer. Baptism is an opportunity to put on display and give evidence to the saving grace of Jesus Christ in the life of a believer. It gives us the privilege of making a public proclamation to Jesus being our Savior, Lord, and King.

The desire to be baptized should be motivated by our desire to glorify God through our faithful obedience to the command and example of Jesus. You should not pursue baptism to please a friend or family member, or because you want to re-dedicate your life to Christ, or because you want to jump start your faith. Once again, baptism is an outward sign of an inward faith and the glory of God should be our motivation for baptism.

WHO SHOULD BE BAPTIZED?

For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

Galatians 3:27

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

Acts 2:41

But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

Acts 8:12

Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus. And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, "See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?" And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him."

Acts 8:35-38

At Providence we practice **believer's** baptism, not infant baptism. ***Believer's baptism means getting baptized after you have trusted in Christ and made a profession of faith.*** In reading the New Testament, we find baptism continually practiced after repentance and faith in the life of a believer. Baptism is a response to the saving work of the gospel in the life of a believer. This means that if you have believed in Christ and confessed Him as Savior and Lord, then you can and should be baptized.

Why We Practice Believer's Baptism

Believer's baptism is the pattern that we see over and over again throughout the New Testament, especially in the book of Acts. As we look at the ministry of Jesus and the early church, we see that baptisms are consistently happening after a profession of faith and repentance in the life of a believer. As already stated, the stance that we take here on baptism is that baptism is an outward sign of an inward faith. It is a response to who Jesus is and what He has done in our heart and life.

- Texts: Acts 2:36-41; Acts 8:12; Acts 8:35-38; Acts 9:18-19; Acts 10:47-48; Acts 16:15; Acts 16:29-34; Acts 19:4-5

I've Been Baptized Before, So Should I Get Baptized Again?

If your baptism was prior to you placing your faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, then you should be baptized. This means that if you were baptized as an infant and your baptism was not a response to your own saving faith in Jesus, then this was not actually baptism and we would encourage you to get baptized for the first time.

As believers we are a people of process, growth, and change. We all continue to grow in our relationship with Christ and in our formation in Christ. While we might have seasons and periods of growth and also seasons and periods of struggle and stagnation, we should only be baptized one time as a believer in response to the person and work of Jesus Christ in our heart and life. This means that your baptism is true and valid if it happened as a believer even if you have gone through periods of struggle, sin, or suffering since that baptism. There is no need to be baptized again to show that you are committed to Christ or because you feel like you have grown since you were first baptized.

WHEN SHOULD I BE BAPTIZED?

Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus. And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, "See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?" And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him.

Acts 8:35-38

And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name.

Acts 22:16

As soon as a person **trusts** in Christ as Savior and Lord, then they can and should be baptized. In all the accounts of baptism in the bible, baptism is rather immediate to a person believing in Jesus as Savior and Lord. In answering the question, when should I be baptized? Right away if you have trusted in Christ as your Lord and Savior!

In our practice of baptism at Providence Church, we offer multiple opportunities for baptism throughout the year. We believe that baptism should take place within the context of a local church family, so we offer multiple opportunities to be baptized within the gathered church.

HOW SHOULD I BE BAPTIZED?

John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because water was plentiful there, and people were coming and being baptized.

John 3:23

And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him.

Matthew 3:16

And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing.

Acts 8:38–39

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

Romans 6:3–4

At Providence we believe that a person should be baptized by immersion instead of being baptized by sprinkling or having water poured on you.

Why we practice baptism by immersion at Providence:

- βαπτίζω (baptizo) is the Greek word used in the New Testament for baptism. It means to plunge, immerse, or submerge.
- The many examples of baptism throughout the New Testament show proof for baptism by immersion (see above texts of John 3:23, Matthew 3:16, Acts 8:38-39).
- Baptism by immersion is the best picture and representation of our union with Christ. Immersion provides a picture of a believer being united with Christ in His death (submerged into the water) and in His resurrection (raised up from the water).
 - See above texts on Colossians 2:12; Romans 6:3-4.

Note: We know that there are times when a person cannot be immersed or submerged in water. In cases where immersion is not possible due to physical limitations, an alternate mode, such as pouring, will be practiced and is acceptable.

WHO CAN BAPTIZE ME?

The bible gives no prescribed requirements for who can perform a baptism. Therefore, within the context of the gathered and scattered church, we allow any believer, whether male or female, who has faithfully been baptized as a believer themselves to baptize others.

While the Providence pastors, elders, and staff are available to perform baptisms, you are also able to ask a City Group leader, a mentor, a parent, or a friend that attends Providence Church to be the one that baptizes you. We encourage you to ask someone who has been a personal spiritual influence on you as long as they have been baptized as a believer in response to the person and work of Jesus Christ in their heart and life.

BAPTISM OPPORTUNITIES

- We offer regular baptism opportunities in our Sunday throughout the year.
- Everyone being baptized will share a two-sentence testimony and some will share a longer 2-3 minute testimony.
- After your two-sentence testimony, the person baptizing you will state, “Based on your profession of faith in Jesus Christ, I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.” As you go into the water and come up out of the water, some who baptize will also state, “buried with Christ, raised to walk in newness of life.” This comes from Romans 6:4, which is stated above in this booklet.

HELPFUL BAPTISM HINTS

- Please wear dark shirts/shorts to maintain modesty.
- We recommend that you bring two towels, a change of clothes, and a bag to put your wet clothes in.
- Encourage family and friends to arrive early if they want seats close to the baptism tanks. Family and friends are welcome to move forward to take pictures/videos of your baptism.
- Please plan to arrive early for a meeting with all those being baptized. You will receive communication through email with further details of when and where to arrive.

FOR FURTHER STUDY ON BAPTISM

If you are interested in further study on baptism, here are relevant biblical texts for you to read and study:

- Matthew 3, 21, 28
- Mark 1, 6, 7, 10, 11, 16
- Luke 3, 7, 11, 12, 20
- John 1, 3, 4, 10
- Acts 1,2,8,9,10,11,13,16,18,19,22
- Romans 6
- 1 Corinthians 1, 10, 12, 15
- Galatians 3
- Ephesians 4
- Colossians 2
- Hebrews 6, 9
- 1 Peter 3

For further study and reading on baptism resources, you can check out the following:

- www.desiringgod.org/topics/baptism-membership
- www.9marks.org/tag/baptism/
- www.thegospelcoalition.org/topics/baptism/
- *Believer's Baptism: Sign of the New Covenant in Christ*, edited by Thomas Schreiner and Shawn Wright
- *Understanding Baptism (Church Basics)* by Bobby Jamieson
- *Baptism: Three Views*, edited by David Wright

Two-Sentence Testimony

Examples of testimonies from baptismal tank. Testimonies should be 2-3 sentences and reflect the work of Christ in our lives. Baptism is an outward sign of an inward reality.

Begin your two-sentence testimony with, “Hi, my name is...” and say your first and last name.

1) Here are a few suggestions for simple testimonies:

My name is _____ and I publicly proclaim through my baptism that:

- I have decided to follow Jesus!
- I have been set free by Jesus!
- Jesus has made me new!
- Jesus has changed my life!
- Jesus has forgiven me!
- Jesus died for me and I will live for him!

2) Here are a few suggestions for two-sentence (“In the past...”) baptism stories:

- In the past I was dead in my sin and rebelling, but today I am alive in Christ. Today, I am getting baptized to proclaim my new life in Jesus.
- In the past I placed my hope in trying harder, but now I have placed my hope strictly in the finished work of Jesus Christ. I am getting baptized today to put Jesus and his work on display.
- In the past, I tried to please God, but today I have placed my trust in Jesus and his grace.
- In the past, I was enslaved to an addiction, but Jesus Christ has set me free.
- In the past, I did not want to give God control of my life, but today I celebrate the fact that I have surrendered my life to Jesus. He is the leader of my life.
- In the past, I tried to please others and it led to slavery. But now, Jesus has set me free and shown me that my life is to be lived for Him, not for others.
- In the past, I used work and accomplishments to give me a sense of worth and value. Now, I see my true identity as an adopted child of God.
- I was once dead to sin, living for myself. Christ saved me, and now I live for him. I am getting baptized today to display that faith publicly.
- Jesus saved me many years ago, but I never was baptized. Today I am getting baptized as a step of obedience to him and to publicly display that faith.
- While I was running from God, he rescued me. I do not deserve his grace, but he gives it as a free gift. Today I am getting baptized to show that I have died to sin and now live in Him.
- I was once a slave to my sin of addiction. I have been set free by Christ and now live free in him. Today I am getting baptized to show outwardly what has happened in my heart.