

Gospel Community

Introduction

Scripture

John 15:10-13 ¹⁰ "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. ¹¹ "These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full. ¹² "This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. ¹³ "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. (NAS)

Main Idea

Focus

The purpose of this first gathering is to introduce the semester's topic of study, lay the ground rules for the community group, and probably most importantly – have fun getting to know one another! I've included some optional questions for discussion. The first three are to get people thinking about community and the second three are based on the passage above, designed to generate some excitement about what God does in a gospel centered community.

Starters

- Why do you want to be a part of this community group? —OR—
- What do you hope we, as a community group, can be for each other?

Discussion

I. Group Ground-rules

(Use this first meeting to either rehash group ground rules for established groups, or introduce group rules for new groups).

(Suggestions – feel free as the leader to tailor the ground rules of your group). I would encourage you to allow for discussion of any of the ground rules you set. The idea is that the group as a whole understands, agrees to, and takes ownership of these ground rules. Here are some suggested ground rules.

PURPOSEFUL GROUP

[Here's where you can share the purpose/vision/mission of our community groups – I'll include an extra sheet with this information]

GOSPEL-CENTERED GROUP

Our group will be grace saturated. We will be a safe place to share struggles/burden without the fear of judgment or gossip. In other words, what is shared in the group stays in the group.

Our group will be committed to honesty and hope. [Here's what I mean by this, feel free to put into your own words] Honesty about ourselves and our sin without hope can turn into a group therapy session. Hope with honesty can be blind optimism/"everything will work out" philosophy. The gospel tells us we can be honest with ourselves and others (and all the sin and messiness that entails) and find hope for forgiveness and change in Christ.

COMMITTED GROUP

Our group will strive for a balance between casual time and purposeful time. This is to ensure that we are connecting socially and spiritually.

Our group will commit to regular attendance. Of course, this isn't a sign on the dotted line kind of thing. Life happens and people will miss. But in order for us to pursue community together we need to develop the conformability and safety that comes from regular interaction.

Our group will respect our established Starting Time/Ending Time.

Rules for Children – This would be a good one to discuss since we're all still trying to figure out how to handle this. I'd say just share the fact that children are a joy and welcome. Also, just acknowledge that sometimes they'll take a mom or dad away from the discussion. This is ok. The goal is to guard the purposeful time together as much as possible.

II. Looking Ahead to our Study

Community

Q1: What is community?

A1: This is a free-for-all question. Listen and learn. Where is everyone coming from in their ideas and notions of what community looks like.

Q2: When have you experienced what you consider to be true community?

A2: Same as above. Listen and learn.

Q3: What obstacles do we face in our culture in building and being a community?

A3: We'll be returning to this question often as we encounter each one another. Geographical distance, individualism, the myth of self-sufficiency, lack of trust, laziness, our tendency to value _____ over relationships (many things could go in that blank)....

Gospel Community

[You might want to say a few words about the nature of the upcoming study. The study is based on the "one-another" passages of the New Testament. Every author of the new testament epistles (except Jude) describes the effects of the gospel in terms of the "one-another" community it creates. Taking a look at a survey of these "one-anothers" gives us a picture of what true Christian community should look like. The purpose of the study is to learn what Christian community is and to pursue its reality together.

Q4: According to the passage, how can we experience the joy of abiding in Jesus' love?

A4: The reasoning of the passage goes like this...If we keep Jesus' commandments; we will abide in his love. Jesus is telling us to keep his commandment so that we will experience "full" joy in life. So, joy and the experience of Jesus' love are found in obeying his commands. What are his commandments? He boils it down to one: Love one another, as he has loved us. In short, gospel community (the living out of the one anothers) is the place where the joy of Jesus and the love of God are released.

Q5: How does this passage demonstrate the uniqueness/importance of community that is based on the gospel?

A5: Gospel community is created by the most radical of loves – the love of God for His people shown to us at the cross. And gospel community calls us to love one another with the most radical of loves – the standard of Jesus, laying down our lives for our friends.

Prayer

As you look ahead to the fall, what is one area of your life where you would like to experience more of the joy and love of Jesus? After sharing, pray. And remember to ask that God would use this community to help make his joy and love known in that particular area.