



Community Group Study Notes

Fall 2016

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READ THIS FIRST

THANK YOU for your help in leading our community groups. We don't know what we would do without you :)

PLEASE:

- Read through all this document - it will be very helpful to you as prepare
- Refresh your memory as to what the vision of CG are. It's vital we are all on the same page.
- Bring this with you on Sunday and make supplementary notes from the sermon - it will help!
- Make copies for anyone else who is leading

WHAT IS A COMMUNITY GROUP?

A Community Group is a group of (ideally) 8–15 people who live life together on mission. Every Community Group meets regularly throughout the week to unpack and apply God’s Word to their lives, pray, and simply do ordinary life together with gospel intentionality.

A Community Group is the intentional organizing of the scattered church, the people of WPC. This means that we define what a Community Group is and does according to how God defines what His Church is and does. Therefore, the best way to understand a Community Group is to understand a biblical, gospel-centred definition of the Church.

FOUR COMPONENTS OF A HEALTHY COMMUNITY GROUP

1. DEVOTED TO THE WORD AND PRAYER

Community Groups are more than Bible studies, but the Scriptures are central to our life together. What we study in Scripture leads us to worship Jesus, to love one another, and to live missionally.

Prayer is a gift from God to us. It is an opportunity to communicate with the Creator of the universe. We have the ability to praise Him, confess our sin, ask for His provision and listening for His response. Our Community Groups should be marked by a praying culture.

2. DEVOTED TO MISSION

Mission among those who are yet to come to Jesus often looks like simple acts of engagement and service within our neighbourhoods for the glory of Jesus and the advancement of God’s Kingdom. This is the outward focus of your group: to love people and share the truth of the gospel through the witness of your life together. This should be a consistent focus of your Community Group in both prayer and action.

3. DEVOTED TO COMMUNITY

Community Groups are places where we can know others and in turn allow ourselves to truly be known. In our devotion to pursuing community as a church family, we will grow more like Jesus.

4. DEVOTED TO REPLICATING

God has tasked His Church with the job of discipleship, which means multiplication. We believe that if the previous three components are put in place and faithfully followed out, our Community Groups will grow fruitfully. But we aren't merely talking about numerical growth; we are talking about growth in depth in the life of each disciple. When individual Community Groups grow in number, we have the need to start new ones - which we love to do!

COMMUNITY GROUP LEADERS INSTRUCTIONS

In preparation for each study, take a few moments to read through the instructions below and listen to the message online and take some notes. The message can be found online at willowparkchurch.com

Before the Group Meeting

As you prepare for the CG, work through the questions and consider how you might answer them.

1. Take notes from the message connected to the CG session. Take special note of any extra scriptures that you may want to refer to in your group.
2. Spend time in prayer asking God to help you as lead.
3. Think through ways you can help your group apply what is being taught instead of simply knowing what's been taught. Write down two or three ideas that might be helpful.
4. Ask the Lord to move powerfully in the personal lives of each CG member and also in your time together.

At the Group Meeting

1. Begin with prayer. Confess your need for the Spirit's help.
2. Attempt to summarize the week's lesson in a few quick thoughts. Spend some time asking your group about the personal study and what they found interesting, convicting or encouraging.
3. Assign readers for the sections of Nehemiah and supplemental passages that week.
4. Walk your group through the questions. Use the Leader Guide to help facilitate the discussion. Don't feel obligated to cover every single question. At times, there will be healthy digression. At other times, you will need to keep the group on track. Be sensitive to the flow of conversation and keep it moving in a healthy direction.
5. Share your thoughts on how you and your group can apply the lesson. Help the group formulate ideas for reading, studying and meditating on the Scriptures.
6. End in a time of prayer. Ask God to strengthen you to obedience, increasing your depth of life, experience and enjoyment of Him



OUR CHURCH VISION - “To see lives transformed by Jesus Christ in the Okanagan Valley”

The REAL life series takes the church through our new vision describing life in the way God intended - REAL life. Each section (R.E.A.L) examines an aspect of God’s plan for life

The series encapsulates our new vision both theologically and practically - starting at creation and culminating with an examination of what an active, life-giving relationship with God should be like. Important theological terms (justification, sanctification, redemption etc) will be explained and applied to real life.



REDEMPTION In order to understand *what* salvation is, it is important that we understand what it is we are saved *from* and *why* Jesus needed to die.



EMPOWERED Once we experience God’s changing power in our life at conversion (justification) we also receive the gift of righteousness. The process of sanctification and being filled with the Holy Spirit begins.



ACTIVE Once we are saved and empowered to serve the call begins. What does the active life look like in church and in our community?



LISTENING The bedrock of all that we have studied is our day-to-day connection with God. Without prayer and hearing from God then everything else we do will be for nothing and will likely fail.

Each week we will present the topic with

- key scriptures,
- sound doctrine,
- practical life application and
- a gospel presentation.

The following ministry areas should be highlighted throughout the series with supporting literature available for those interested:

- Set Free
- Lifetracks
- Listening Life
- Alpha
- Community Groups

Suggested Resources: (These all helped putting this series together :)

- **Wayne Grudem's "Bible Doctrine"** is an excellent resource for 75% of the teaching. Please note Grudem's writing on baptism of the Holy Spirit and the gifts would not necessarily align with our viewpoint.
- **JD Greer "Jesus Continued"** - Holy Spirit work
- **Michael Horton "Putting amazing back into Grace"** - all round good resource for several aspects of the series.
- **JC Ryle "Holiness"** - excellent on sin and sanctification
- **Francis Chan "Forgotten God" - Holy Spirit**
- **Francis Chan "Crazy Love"** - great for the Active Life teaching

Series Flow:

- Week 1 - The Redeemed Life Pt 1 - **Rebels**
- Week 2 - The Redeemed Life pt 2 - **Saved**
- Week 3 - The Empowered Life pt 1 - **Justified**
- Week 4 - The Empowered Life pt 2 - **Sanctified**
- Week 5 - The Empowered Life pt 3 - **Filled**
- Week 6 - The Empowered Life pt 4 - **Gifted**
- Week 7 - The Active Life pt 1- **Members**
- Week 8 - The Active Life pt 2 - **Called**
- Week 9 - The Listening Life 1 - **Pray-ers**
- Week 10 - The Listening Life 2 - **Listeners**



WEEK 1 - "THE REDEEMED LIFE PT 1 - REBELS

What makes the gospel good news? What was God's plan in creating us? When and why did it all go so wrong?

- What stood out to you from the weekend's teaching? What did you find challenging?
- **Genesis 3:7-8** How do people hide from God (and each other) because of shame?
- What Adam and Eve started we have continued (Rom 5:12) How have you experienced this to be true?
- What difference can you see in the response of David to sin in Psalm 51 compared to Adam and Eve in Gen 3?
- What can we learn from David's attitude to sin?
- **Isaiah 1:11-20** What are God's thoughts about you trying to do good without a genuine relationship with Him? What good does religious activity do?
- How can religious rituals, rules and tradition become a substitute for a genuine relationship with God?
- **Mark 7:14-23** What does Jesus teach about where sin does and does not begin.
- **Rom 5:6** We are assured that while we struggle with sin Jesus died for us - just at the right time. When was this right time for you? Describe the time God rescued you and the ways that you were weak and powerless to help yourself.



WEEK 3 - "THE EMPOWERED LIFE PT 1 - JUSTIFIED"

What happens to you at the moment of conversion? What are the benefits of being a Christian?

Justification - God the judge has declared us free, innocent and redeemed in Jesus. Our standing with him is changed - we are adopted children.

- What stood out to you from the weekend's teaching? What did you find challenging?
- How do we see our desire for justice played out in our culture?
- **Rom 5:8-9 ; Gal 2:15-16** What do you learn from these verses about justification?
- What is the difference between having a salvation based on what good you do and having a faith that's active and leads you to good works?
- **Col 2:13-14** What does this verse say about your ability to save yourself?
- Why is it important we understand our "standing" before God before we start "working out our salvation" (Phil 2)?
- **Romans 8: 14-17; Gal 4:1-7** What's changed in you now that you are a Christian? List what this passage says. How does knowing this empower us in our lives?
- Why do we struggle with the idea that God delights in us?
- **PAUSE and pray** - work through some of the new identity listed in the above passages - thank Jesus for each of them as a group.



WEEK 4 - "THE EMPOWERED LIFE PT 2 - SANCTIFIED"

How does God change us? What is God's role and what is our role as we mature as Christians?

Sanctification - The ongoing journey of becoming more and more like Jesus through the empowering and filling of the Holy Spirit. It's a combination of our work driven by a love for Jesus initiated by the Holy Spirit.

- What stood out to you from the weekend's teaching? What did you find challenging?
- What's the difference between *positional* holiness and *manifest* holiness? Why do we need positional holiness first?
- **Col 3:1-4** How would life be different if we continually had our focus on Jesus? What "things that are on earth" catch your attention?
- **John 17:13-19** What are we sanctified in? What is the result of the sanctification journey?
- **Heb 4:12** How does the word of God help us in our transformation? What does this look like practically for you?
- **John 16:5-15** What is the Holy Spirit's role in the sanctification journey?
- How do we know something is drawing us away from Jesus (a sin) when it is not clearly stated in the bible? Can you give some examples?
- What part does conviction and confession play in our becoming more like Jesus?
- PAUSE and pray - What is the Spirit pointing out to you? What do you need to bring to the cross and seek forgiveness for? Spend time confessing and thanking Jesus for his sacrifice.



WEEK 5 - "THE EMPOWERED LIFE PT 3 - FILLED"

Why does the bible instruct that I be filled with Spirit? What is the spirit's work in my life?

- What stood out to you from the weekend's teaching? What did you find challenging?
- **John 15:26; John 16:14; John 14:26; John 16:8; John 15:5** . In Jesus' words what would you say are some of the roles of the Holy Spirit?
- **John 16:4** Pastor Glen mentioned that the Holy Spirit is like floodlight on a monument. What did he mean by that? Who is the monument in this analogy? What does this show you about the Holy Spirit's work in the world?
- **Acts 1:4-8; Acts 4:31; Romans 15:13; 1 Cor 3:16; Gal 4:4-7; 1 John 4:13** These are a few of the benefits of being filled with the Holy Spirit. If you ignored your own experiences what would you expect to see if someone was filled with the Holy Spirit? Do you know Him in this way?
- **Eph 1:13; Eph 5:18; Acts 13:62; 1 Thess 5:19 (Lk 11:13 Jesus referring to those who already know God)** Scriptures point to the fact that we are filled with the Holy Spirit when we become a Christian but there is also a need for regular filling. In what way do we quench the Holy Spirit's work in our lives? How do we seek to be filled? How is prayer key?
- PAUSE and pray - spend time thanking Jesus for the gift of the Holy Spirit in salvation. Ask God to fill you with the Holy Spirit. Ask for forgiveness for the ways in which we quench the Holy Spirit in our lives.



WEEK 7 - "THE ACTIVE LIFE PT 1 - MEMBERS"

Is going to church really necessary? Do I need to be actively involved?

A "member" is somebody who, by word of commitment says, "I'm committed to a special group of people, a people who hear the word of God preached; a people who worship together and 'do life together'; a people who commit to the 'one another' commandments (love each other, exhort each other, admonish each other, hold each other accountable etc).

- What stood out to you from the weekend's teaching? What did you find challenging?
 - **1 Cor 12:12-27** What is significant to you about Paul using the analogy of the body when describing how the church functions. Discuss how else the human body and the church are similar.
 - **Acts 2:42-47** Make a list of the different aspects of church family life that the early Christians experienced. How does this contrast with our culture? Give a few examples of times in your life when you have experienced the church working in this way.
 - **Eph 4:16** - Why do you think that Jesus builds his church *as a result* of his people working together? Why doesn't he just build his church without us?
 - In what way are you actively working in the church? How could you be involved? (CG leaders please take a note and let us know if someone wants to volunteer).
 - Why is it important to become a member at Willow Park Church?
 - Refer to the document "Why become a member at willow park church" - in the appendix)
 - Please give each of your CG group a copy of the document. Copies can be found at church.
 - Why do people sometimes resist becoming a member of a church in our culture? Are they biblical reasons?
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WEEK 8 - "THE ACTIVE LIFE PT 2 - Called"

Now I am a Christian what is my calling and purpose?

CG Leaders - The first two questions are a recap - no need to dwell on them

- What stood out to you from the weekend's teaching? What did you find challenging?
- **The Call to BE like Jesus – universal for all Christians** - "Whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked" (1 John 2:6)
 - In what ways do we become more like Jesus (recap previous weeks)
 - What disciplines are important for a Christian
 - What is the Holy Spirit's role in this process of sanctification?
- **The Call to DO (week 7) – gifts and strengths unique to you** – "Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them" (Rom 12:26)
 - What is the difference between strengths and gifts - week 6
- **The Call to GO into the world and share the gospel - universal for all Christians** – "entrusting to us the message of reconciliation." (2 Cor 5:11-21); "And he said to them, "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation." (Mark 16:15)
 - Why do Christians find it so challenging to share the gospel?
 - What can we do to increase in our sharing
 - Discuss times when you have stepped out in faith and spoken to someone about Jesus. What happened? What did you learn?
 - What would be a simple way to share your faith this week.

**** As a group commit to choosing ONE person to pray for. Commit to speak to this person about your faith before an agreed date. Plan a time as a group when you can invite people to your CG or to Church.***



WEEK 9 - "THE LISTENING LIFE PT 1 - Pray-ers"

Why does God want us to pray? What good does it do?

- What stood out to you from the weekend's teaching? What did you find challenging?

"For the Christian, God is not something but someone – and primarily someone who is spoken to, rather than only spoken about. Moreover, this someone addressed in prayer is not feared as a tyrant but genuinely loved as the sovereign and free God who exercises dominion and astonishing goodness and mercy. Prayer is thus our acceptance to call upon God in confidence. Maturing in prayer does not mean mastering certain techniques or becoming virtuosos of the spiritual life. It means, on the contrary, being open and honest with God, praising God but also crying to God in our need, and even sometimes crying out against God." (Daniel L Miligiore)

- **Phil 4:4-8** Paul presents pray as a clear command. What parts of this scripture support that? Why does God command us to pray when he is complete control of everything anyway? What benefit is there shown in these verses?
- **Isaiah 40:31; Ezekiel 22:30; Matthew 7:7-11; John 10:27; Ephesians 6:10-18; 1 Thessalonians 5:18; Hebrews 13:15; 1 John 1:9** List the different aspects of prayer.
- **Ps 32:6-7** In what way is prayer a hiding place? Why do we all need hiding places?
- Why is it important to use scripture in our prayer times?
- As a group, Use Luther's pattern in prayer to pray through **Phil 4:4-8** :
 - What is there for me to PRAISE God for?
 - What do I need CONFESS to God?
 - What is there for me to ASK for?
- Commit to come to the next Willow One prayer

Appendix

Why become a member at Willow Park Church?

“For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.”

Ephesians 2:18–19

Should you become a member of a local church?

To be really bold right at the beginning – **YES!**

A "member" is somebody who, by word of commitment says, "I'm committed to a special group of people, a people who hear the word of God preached; a people who worship together and 'do life together'; a people who commit to the 'one another' commandments (love each other, exhort each other, admonish each other, hold each other accountable etc).

This is what makes membership so wonderfully biblical and beneficial!

They can only be fulfilled in the local church – transparently making ourselves available to commit, serve, encourage and connect with a group of people on a regular basis. This leads to tremendous personal growth as well as God Himself saying that He will grow his church as we work together (Eph 4:16)

Jesus lived and died for the church (Eph. 5:25).

- In Christ, you are a member of the invisible church.
- In Christ, you are called to become a member of a local church.

For some reason we sometimes resist committing to membership. Why?

Being lovingly honest? [Maybe we just don't like the thought of commitment](#). More often than not this is not based on biblical conviction but more on past experience or just enjoying our own independence.

There is direct and indirect evidence from the New Testament on why we believe you should become a member of a local church.

The Early Church

We have to do theological gymnastics to try and make the New Testament say that Church membership is not God's ideal for us.

Here are a few key scriptures from the New Testament:

1. They kept [numerical records](#) (Acts 2:37–47).
2. They kept [records of widows](#) (1 Tim. 5:3–16).
3. They held [elections and had voting systems](#) (Acts 6:1–6).
4. They exercised [church discipline](#) (Matt. 18:15–20; 1 Cor. 5; Gal. 6:1).
5. Their leaders were [responsible for giving an account of their leadership](#) and the church was asked to submit to their leaders (Heb. 13:17).
6. They had an [awareness of who was a church member](#) (Rom. 16:1–16).
7. Most of the [epistles were written "to the church" in given places](#) (1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 2:1; Gal. 1:2; Eph. 1:2; Phil. 1:1; 1 Thess. 1:1 2 Thess. 1:1; Rev. 1:4).

In order for any of these things to happen there had to be some form of organised membership.

There is also some indirect evidence:

- Salvation is an individual experience that leads to involvement with a new community, the church.
- When you are saved, the Holy Spirit integrates you into the Body of Christ. This means that you are now a part of Jesus' body on earth, which is the church (1 Cor. 12:12–17).
- Your work within the church is also compared to working together as a family (1 Tim. 3:15; 5:1–2). In Christ, you are adopted into God's family. You are now his son or daughter and have

a multitude of new brothers and sisters in Christ. In Christ, you are a member of a new family (Rom. 12:4–5; Eph. 2:18–19).

For these metaphors to be valid and applicable, we should be able to recognise who are members of the local body and family.

When you begin to look at these texts it becomes clear that God's plan for his church is that we would belong to a local covenant community of faith. This is for our own protection and growth, and for the good of others.

We don't offer church membership like it's a casual membership to H2O, Good Life Fitness, or a golf club. At Willow Park Church, [we take church membership seriously](#) and there are several things that we lovingly expect from our members.

- Members must be a Christian who have been baptized at some point as a demonstration of their faith.
- Prospective members take part in a short meeting that is led by one of elders where they explain what being a member means and give an outline of some of our local church history.
- Afterwards members are encouraged to serve in the church, pray for the church, give to the church, read their Bible regularly, love their brothers and sisters in Christ, respect the authority of church leaders, submit to church discipline if necessary, attend worship services, and share the gospel with others in word and deed.

Become a Member of a Local Church!

If you are a Christian and you are not a member of a local church, then I encourage you to get connected with a church as soon as possible. Don't take this lightly. Your membership with a church is needed and necessary (1 Cor. 12:4–31).

If you have been participating in the life of WP Church but have yet to make the commitment to become a member, then I encourage you to take that step!

For more information, please sign up at the connect desk.

APPENDIX 2

Suggestions to help with prayer.

- 1. Relax and think about God** (Psalm 46:10). This can be encouraged by praise and worship; reading and meditating on God's Word; contemplating God's greatness, power and love (James 4:8; 2 Corinthians 10:5).
- 2. Submit your mind and will into God's hand and focus your attention on God.** In private prayer we must make adequate time for God. This takes discipline at first, but soon the discipline becomes not a duty, but a joy (Matthew 6:6).
- 3. Choose a time of the day or night when you are not going to be disturbed.** Make sure you have enough time not only to speak to God, but also to listen to Him.
- 4. Confess any sin you are aware of.** Willful sin blocks communion with God and gives Satan a way into our lives. Confess any sin that the Holy Spirit is showing you at the time and receive God's forgiveness (1 John 1:9). We also need to forgive others who have wronged us, no matter how hurtful and wrong they may have been (Matthew 6:12; Luke 6:37, 38). Jesus forgave us much and He expects us to forgive others without holding grudges. When we confess and forgive we can accept God's cleansing and know that we have a pure heart before Him.
- 5. Pray for the Holy Spirit to fill you to overflowing.** (Ephesians 5:18) In faith, ask the Holy Spirit to empower you, to direct you and to pray through you.
- 6. Be expectant.** Expect that God will speak to you and so wait upon Him (Psalm 62:5). God will speak.
- 7. Be obedient.** When God gives you something to pray or say to Him or others, be obedient and speak it out.
- 8. Persevere.** Be determined to stick at it, no matter what problems may arise (Luke 11:8; Luke 18:1–8). Many people fail in this area. You need to pray, persevering until

you know you have got somewhere and the peace of God settles in your heart (Philippians 4:7). Do not go on your feelings, however. There will be days when prayer seems far from you. Continue to pray anyway, and God will bless you and bring you close to Himself again. **REMEMBER – trust the promises not the perception.**

- 9. Be normal and natural.** Speak normally and naturally to God. There is no need to use formal or religious language. God is your Father and loves you for being you.
- 10. Don't worry.** Deliberately stop worrying. Being anxious is a sin and is a lack of trust in your heavenly Father, according to Jesus (Matthew 6:25–34). Always approach prayer with faith in God.
- 11. Present your requests.** God wants you to present your personal requests to Him (Philippians 4:6) because nothing is too small or trivial for your heavenly Father. However, it is also important to pray for the needs of others. Be specific because God wants you to see specific answers to your prayers. Prayer lists can be helpful but when the lists are exhausted, allow the Holy Spirit to lead you. In your private prayer times it is often helpful to pray aloud because this stops your mind from wandering.
- 12. Praise and thanksgiving.** Intersperse prayer with praise and thanksgiving, especially for answered prayer. Answered prayer builds faith and trust in God.
- 13. Use Scripture.** Use Luther's pattern in prayer as you study a passage of scripture:
 - a. What is there for me to PRAISE God for?
 - b. What do I need CONFESS to God?
 - c. What is there for me to ASK for?
- 14. Fast.** Prayer aligned to fasting adds a cutting edge to prayer. This is not a pressure we exert on God which compels Him to answer us, but is simply a way of denying and disciplining yourself so that there is less of you, and more given over to God, in your life at that time.

Recommended Reading on prayer

A Praying Life : Paul Miller

Power through Prayer : E.M. Bounds

The Essentials of Prayer : E.M Bounds

Prayer: Philip Yancey

Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God: Timothy Keller

