

# Community Groups

*“And they devoted themselves to the apostles teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers” Acts 2:42*

## **Why a Community Group?**

A **community group** is designed to be a small group context where people can live out the mission statement of Midtown Community Church to “*draw people into community, grow as an authentic worshipping community, and send them out to renew and create communities locally and globally.*” Community groups are intended to be groups of 6-15 people, varying in gender and spiritual maturity. When you look at the ministry of Jesus, he had a group of 12 people that he invested in regularly (Looking at Luke 8:1-3, this group also included women). These groups have very clear leaders (male and female) who intentionally seek to foster discipleship. Whereas discipleship groups are closed invitation-only groups, community groups are publicized and open to visitors.

While every community group will look different, they should all seek to embody each of these aspects of the church’s vision. No community group will reflect the vision of Midtown Community Church perfectly, nor will each of the aspects of this vision be represented evenly. Some community groups may do a better job at drawing people in, and other community groups may do a better job at growing as a worshipping community. Every community group will also look different in terms of how they reflect the vision of Midtown. Some may be drawing in by having non-believers regularly in their small group, and others may be drawing in by simply praying for unbelievers during their prayer time. Knowing that there are numerous ways in which a community group can reflect the vision of Midtown, all community groups should still seek to embody the full vision of Midtown in some fashion.

It is also important to note that community groups are intended to be the primary context for pastoral care in the church. Our shepherding structure involves each of our elders overseeing specific community groups with the assistance of the Women’s Shepherding Team.

## **What do they do?**

*Acts 2:42-47* <sup>42</sup> They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. <sup>43</sup> Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. <sup>44</sup> All the believers were together and had everything in common. <sup>45</sup> Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. <sup>46</sup> Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, <sup>47</sup> praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

This passage in Acts gives us a good picture of what every community group should practice on a regular basis:

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- **Devotion to God’s Word (v.42):** Every community group should move to a place where they begin to open God’s Word. There should be teaching of God’s Word by a leader, discussion of God’s Word as a group, and application of God’s Word in our lives and hearts. How this plays out may differ from each community group. Typically, groups will either study a particular book of the bible, a book by a Christian author, or a topical study. Whichever is the format, they should all point people to the Word of God as that is the only content which promises to “not return empty” (Isaiah 55:11).
- **Devotion to Prayer (v.42):** We encourage every community group to begin and end the time with prayer. But more than that, a community group should be devoted to praying with and for one another. For many groups, they achieve this by praying at the end of a bible study. Some spend time as a whole group praying for one another. Most split up into guys and girls groups for the purpose of sharing prayer requests and then praying together. Whichever the format, prayer should be practiced in the life of a group.
- **Devotion to Fellowship (v.42, 46):** Every group should simply be in one another’s presence. This obviously takes place in the context of bible study and prayer, but there is another aspect of the group which is simply “being together”. In 1 Thessalonians 2:8, Paul states, *“We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us”*. One of the best ways for this to take place is around food. Some groups share a dinner or dessert together every week, others find a time outside of their regular meeting schedule to go out to eat as a group. This can also take place in the context of a game night, over a sporting event, celebration of birthdays, or throwing simple parties.
- **Devotion to Service (v. 44-45):** The testimony of the church is one that is devoted to one another not just in word, but also in deed. It is an involvement in one another’s lives that goes beyond the spiritual and social, but also moves into the physical world of people’s lives. First, the passage implies knowing one another’s needs. Second, it means meeting those needs. It may be providing a meal for someone who is sick, offering financial help where needed, or helping someone mowing their lawn.

## ***What is the format?***

Some groups meet for bible study every week, while others do bible study twice/month and have socials twice/month. While there is some variance, the typical format is to have dessert, icebreaker, bible study, and close in prayer. Some groups do questions based on the sermon, while others may study a Christian book or a bible book.

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## ***When do they meet?***

These groups meet at night or on weekends in the context of people’s homes. They typically meet on a weekly basis, though in some cases they meet twice/month.

## ***How do I find one?***

All of our groups are publicized on our website: <http://midtown-church.org/community-groups/>. However, if have any other questions about community groups or need help in figuring out the best fit, feel free to contact Pastor Lindsey Williams at [lindsey@midtown-church.org](mailto:lindsey@midtown-church.org)