



# GASHLAND

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## COMMUNITY GROUPS

### Why Community Groups:

#### ***Acts 2:42-47***

*“They devoted themselves to the apostles teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyday they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts.”*

### Definition of Community Groups:

Smaller groups of individuals and families that meet together on a regular basis in order to facilitate care, prayer, sharing life with others and growing in their relationship with Jesus Christ and one another.

### What Community Groups are not:

- Community Groups **are not** therapy groups or counseling sessions. Instead Pastor Ritchey can point you to a number of biblical counselors and therapy groups.
- Community Groups **are not** intensive Bible Study groups. Although these groups will converse about the Bible together in a meaningful way, this is not the place for homework or intensive study. GEPC provides other outlets for this purpose such as Sunday School and men’s and women’s Bible studies.
- Community Groups **are not** the sole providers of care and mercy. GEPC provides deacons to shoulder this important role.
- Community Groups **are not** the primary providers of deep soul care toward gospel discipline or direction or spiritual oversight. GEPC has elders whose primary calling takes on this role.

Community Groups are freed then, to learn and practice friendship and hospitality in the context of Bible sharing, personal story and good food. They practice the kinds of care that friends provide such as meals, prayer, laughter, listening, phone calls, encouragement and enjoyable presence.

### Logistics:

#### How big , how often, how long?

Community groups will contain 8-10 adults who are strongly encouraged to meet twice per month. Each group will covenant with one another to commit to meeting on a certain day and time and for a certain duration. We are asking that groups commit to meeting for 12-18 months before dividing, or growing, or welcoming new guests for the sake of truly working on deeper intimate relationships among one another.

## **Curriculum:**

You will not be left alone or without guidance! It is our hope that each group will follow similar paths during their 18mo community group journey, while also experiencing freedom to choose within the context of their unique group needs and pace. A sample flow of a group would be

### **First round | A study, Book Discussion or Video on the Christian Community**

The importance of it, how God designed us function within it. This allows the group to start with an understanding of why they are meeting together and the need/importance of it. There will be

### **Second round | A study on Grace and the Gospel**

This is paramount to the philosophy of ministry at GEPC and we all need the gospel daily as well as a clear understanding of God's grace and the freedom found in that. Again this is a foundational study so that everything forward can build on this. Recommended resources will be provided for this.

### **Third round | Life Stories**

By this point hopefully there is a level of trust, friendship and intimacy growing in your group. It is recommended that each group spend a season getting to know one another on a deeper level and share their "life story" with another, with perhaps one person or couple going each week.

### **Fourth round | Sermon Series Discussion**

At different times of the year Community groups will be encouraged to do a sermon series study. This is a time where Ritchey will provide a short devotional or extra study resources to further dive into his Sunday morning message, pulling out more personal application and so forth.

### **Service**

We also hope that your group will focus outwards and find opportunities or seasons to spend time together serving. Serving one another or out in the community or as a group within the church.

*A list of trusted authors, studies, books, resources will be provided to each group and its facilitator. We do not want you to feel like an island, we hope for consistency and biblical accuracy as well, all while allowing freedoms in each group.*

## **Childcare:**

We will let each group decide how they would like to provide childcare. Some groups may have teenagers that can be utilized for younger children. Some groups may decide to leave all children at home and secure private babysitters, which GEPC is committed to helping reimburse for and can provide youth babysitter referrals. If children are old enough to participate in the early fellowship time or meal, that is wonderful as this promotes community across families and generations.

## **How formed?**

A few factors will determine how a group is formed. Availability or day of the week open. Location. We would rather not form groups of individuals who are living 30 minutes for example, as it is hard to maintain day to day involvement and organic life together.

## **Demographics**

There may be times when season of life will be considered in the forming of groups.

## **Sample evening:**

Sample Schedule:

**7:00-7:30-** Fellowship, food, conversation, relaxed time to enjoy each other.

**7:30-8:15-** Biblical Discussion

**8:15-8:30-** Genuine time of prayer for one another

Each group will decide on what they will do together at each meeting.

## **Roles Needed:**

### **Community Group Facilitator**

An individual or couple who is willing to initially take the lead in overseeing the group. This would include helping with:

- Scheduling
- Gathering information
- Staying in contact with members
- \*Taking the lead in facilitating discussions

\*We are not asking this role to prepare more than others, or to lecture or teach, but to merely come prepared and be willing to keep the conversation going and on track. Some groups after time may decide to divide this role and take turns. But our desire is to initially secure one person/couple per group that is willing to take on this role.

The facilitators will be identified and will let the Relationship Team know which nights they are available and groups will then most likely be formed using that as a springboard. It is also our hope that facilitators and groups will not function without support from this committee and the GEPC leadership. But rather would have help, oversight, support and consistency in its relationship with both.

### **Host Home**

An individual or couple willing to open up their home on a bimonthly basis for the groups use. This may be a longterm commitment or again, after a time the group may decide to take turns hosting. A meal or snacks are encouraged but does not need to fall on this host. The facilitator can be the host if they would like, but our commitment is to have both roles covered at the onset of the group forming.