

Gospel Community Group Covenant

Purpose

To provide a predictable environment where group participants grow closer in fellowship with one another and experience true community in the context of small groups in which the members are able to love, pray for, learn from, cry with, rely on, and share with one another in practical ways.

Values & Goals

Relationships

While prayer, discussion, and study are key elements of a Gospel Community Group, the main focus of the group is the building of relationships.

Authenticity

The atmosphere of a Gospel Community Group should encourage openness and transparency among its members. This is an environment where people should feel free to be themselves.

Confidentiality

For authenticity to occur, members must be able to trust that issues discussed within a Gospel Community Group will not be shared outside the group.

Respect

Group members should never say anything that will embarrass or harm their spouse or other members of the group. When confrontation is needed, it should be done with truth in love.

Availability

A primary responsibility of community is to prioritize for specific relationships. This requires a willingness to be available to meet each other's needs, both inside and outside of the group meetings.

Group Guidelines

1. Groups will meet for a minimum of 12 months and a maximum of 24 months.
(See Appendix)
2. The group will meet approximately from _____ (date) through _____ (date). At the end of this time period the group will then decide its next course of action. (See Appendix)
3. Groups should not exceed 9 members.
4. The group will typically meet on _____ night.
5. The group sessions will generally begin at _____ (time) and end at _____ (time).
6. The group time will typically consist of _____ minutes of sharing, _____ of study/discussion, and _____ of prayer.
7. The group will be a closed group unless all members agree to add additional members.
8. Group meetings are a top priority. Group members agree to attend and participate on a regular basis. Members also agree to pray for and be in contact with other group members on a weekly basis.

I covenant together with the other members of this group to honor this agreement.

Group Leader(s) print & sign:

Group Members sign:

Date

Appendix

Why does Emmaus believe it is best to limit groups to two years and what are the options for group members after that?

Although one of the key purposes of Gospel Community Groups is to build lasting relationships among its members, we also see the importance of creating and identifying new leaders. It is primarily for this reason that we believe that groups should be limited to approximately two years. After meeting for two years our hope is that new leaders will be identified and trained so that more people at Emmaus can be blessed by involvement in a healthy Gospel Community Group.

Also, we believe that it is important to maintain healthy group dynamics. Groups need to continually be challenged, encouraged, and stimulated in order to bring about growth. Another primary reason for this two year time limit is due to the fact that after a period of several years of meeting with the same people, groups tend to become somewhat stale as members become so comfortable with one another that their growth process becomes hindered. When this occurs, the group tends to lose focus and stops growing in effectiveness and maturity.

Also, we believe that being specific about the time commitments of the leaders and participant from the beginning will help to provide focus to the task at hand, namely, the building of relationships and gospel witness within the community. By understanding that time for growth in these areas is limited, our hope is that members will be more intentional with their time together.

Lastly, we believe that it is important to give both leaders and participants the opportunity to count the cost before committing to a group such as this. To be unclear about the time span of the commitment would make it difficult for some to enter into covenant. We understand that some Gospel Community Group leaders may not have the desire or the ability to lead a group perpetually and the same is true for participants when it comes to their involvement. Because of this we believe it is best to be specific about the time span to which leaders and participants are committing to.

For these reasons, Emmaus Christian Fellowship believes that it is highly important to encourage members to join new groups, re-covenant together in existing groups, or form new groups every two years. We do acknowledge that different people have different needs. At the end of two years it might be best for some to join or form new groups, while for others it may be best to re-covenant together within the existing group with perhaps many if not all of the same members. We believe that ultimately these guidelines will help the members of Emmaus to effectively establish, build, and grow relationships with many people in the years to come while also taking into consideration the need for new leaders that will naturally arise as the church continues to grow in size.