

What is a Gospel Community?

Gospel Communities are intimate fellowships of Christians (at Cornerstone) who are *living life together* in Christ by, meeting regularly and often to **worship** (UPWARD focus), **minister** to each other's spiritual and physical needs (INWARD focus) and strategizing for **mission** (OUTWARD focus) to reach non-believers for Jesus Christ and disciple them in the Lord.

It is Cornerstone's humble attempt to practice genuine New Testament style Christianity by imitating what the believers were doing in Acts 2:42-47 (see front cover).

Weekly they met together in a large group setting (our Sunday morning gatherings) and also in a smaller group setting (our Gospel Communities) to do what can't be done as well in the large meeting.

Essentially, Gospel Communities provide the intimacy necessary to meet the real needs of believers in today's world. There is more **loneliness** today than previous generations have ever known despite our online social networks. Gospel Communities allow members to be known and to know others.

There is a lack of **biblical knowledge** and discernment that hinders parents from teaching their children properly and to prepare them to face the dangers of this world. GC's address that by studying God's relevant word in topical ways that equip parents (while children are present) to disciple their children.

There is a huge need for Christians to **encourage** and **admonish** one another to live for Christ faithfully and to not compromise with the world. GC's foster that encouragement as we pray for one another and hold each other accountable voluntarily to live for Christ.

There are serious **financial** burdens Christians face today and more coming in the future as we approach the end times. GC's are there to assist in emergencies and help each other get through the "hard times" with advice, cash, and prayer, just like the early Christians did when they had and kept "all things in common".

There are many "**one another**" commands given to Christians that can only be carried out in a small group like a GC. Here's a sample: care, comfort, agree, and serve one another. Then there is this: bear one another's burdens. Also, forgive, submit, teach, admonish, encourage, do good, exhort, and stir one another (to good deeds). Even confess your sins to one another and most of all, love one another.

It is next to impossible to obey all these "one another" commands in the context of a spectator only worship experience. That is why the New Testament believers **had to** meet in homes and small groups in order to make this kind of genuine Christianity real. This was not a burden to them, nor was it threatening. They did not try to keep up pretenses or act hypocritical and pretend to be one thing on Sunday morning while another on Tuesday night. They were open and honest, transparent and humbly real with one another.



Gospel Communities at Cornerstone

And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

(Acts 2:42-47 ESV)

What does a typical Gospel Community gathering look like?

They look as varied as the people in them. But ideally, the GC's meet weekly to **eat** (first things first) and eating is and will always be a very important part of fellowship. Eating together symbolizes people that are "at peace" with one another, and wish to share more than each other's food but to share in each other's lives.

Next the GC's **worship** their God, their Savior and their Comforter, the Holy Spirit. Often GC's will sing hymns together so that the next generation will hear and remember the songs that caused our parents to worship God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength. Sometimes this worship will include communion as well with father's taking the lead in serving their families.

Then the GC's will open God's Word to **study**. It may be something spontaneous that a member wants to share with others from a sermon they heard that week, or most likely it will be a topical study that equips Christians to do battle with the world such as Ken Ham's Firm Foundations series which deals with giving Christians honest and intelligent answers to questions like, "Did God create the world in six days?" or "Where did Cain get his wife?" Other studies may include DVD's from Francis Chan, David Platt, John Piper, Chip Ingram, and Voddie Baucham among others.

Towards the end of every gathering there will be **prayer**. The prayer will center around each others needs, both surface needs and deeper needs. The deeper needs may cover areas like struggling marriages or rebellious children, or it may cover a need to battle a specific temptation but almost always it will include prayer for unsaved neighbors, family members and friends.

That's what a typical weekly gathering might look like but the GC's are designed also for people who are living life together and that may mean they will skip a gathering to play together by going bowling or attend a ballgame together. Or perhaps a member's child will be having a recital that all will be invited to attend.

The ideal is achieved when members feel close enough to stop by and "hang out" at each other's homes at unscheduled times. The ideal is achieved when children feel "at home" at the GC's and their rambunctiousness and play is accepted by all because GC's are family and that's what happens when families get together.



How big does a Gospel Community get before multiplying by dividing?

The GC's are always open for new members and may grow as large as a house can handle (which is a lot more than people think!) Ideally, they should be more than 30 in a group (counting children) and less than 50 before a group divides into 2 groups. This may be hard to do if the members have grown close to one another but if the goal is always kept in the forefront of making more disciples then group members will choose to obey Christ in this matter and make room for more.

You can find the latest listing of GC's in the weekly worship folder. If you would like to join a group simply contact the leader and find out when and where they are meeting and show up. Like the City of Alexandria, you will find them "Easy to Get to, Hard to Leave."

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