

Preparing your community group for multiplication

# PREPARING to LAUNCH

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## *How to Use this Study*

This study is designed to be the last study you lead through as you anticipate multiplying your group. The idea of multiplying your group should not be a foreign idea. Hopefully you've been talking about it all along the way, and have specifically introduced this as the next step for your group before starting this study.

It's important that you as the leader are having individual conversations leading up to and as you conduct this study, helping individual group members consider their next steps, addressing concerns, and vision casting for how this multiplication might play out.

Expect some emotions and strong feelings! Hopefully this group has played a meaningful part in the lives of the members, and if so, we should expect some emotions to be elicited when talking about change. That emotion often stems from the fear of loss and the unknown, encapsulated in these two questions: 1. Will I lose these relationships? 2. What's going to happen to me? The fear of loss and unknown. Knowing this, throughout your conversations, reassure your group members of these truths:

- Just because our formal group meetings end, doesn't mean the relationships end—if these relationships are important to you, you'll make the time to continue them.
- The goal of multiplication is ultimately inclusion—not exclusion. By multiplying our influence through multiple new groups, you're creating greater space for new relationships and potential could not happen in your previous group alone.

## SESSION 1

### *A Season to Plant, A Season to Uproot*

## GETTING STARTED

### **Communicate this to your group:**

"Everyone has different "seasons" of life. Part of growing and maturing involves going through times of sorrow, times of joy, times of mourning, and times of rejoicing, just to name a few. Knowing this about the human experience, let's take a look at what the Bible has to say about the cycle of seasons in life."

→ *Have a volunteer read Ecclesiastes 3:1-14*

Have each group member pick one set of contrasting seasons found in verses 1-8, (e.g., "a time to be born, a time to die") and share a time in your own life where you experienced these two opposite seasons.

→ *As the leader, you go first in this activity, so as to model the kind of answer you are looking for.*

### **▪ What do you think is the purpose for these seasons?**

→ *Seasons for crops are required for growth and maturity, God uses seasons for us to enable us to grow and mature into God's image.*

**Communicate this to your group:**

"As we can see all of us has experienced these various seasons at some point in our lives; some of these seasons are more memorable than others. As we have looked at these verses in the context of our daily lives, I want us to now examine these in the context of our Community Group."

- **Which of these opposing seasons seem to apply to our Community Group at this time?**

→ *Plant/uproot; scatter stones/gather them; tear down/build*

- **Considering your answers, how do you feel about this season of our Community Group?**

→ *Allow plenty of time for everyone to respond if they desire, this is an important time for the CG members to gain closure of their time together.*

**Communicate this to your group:**

If the story ended at verse 8, Ecclesiastes would be a pretty hopeless, depressing book. But thankfully, it does not end at verse 8. Let's take a look one more time at verses 9-14.

- **According to this passage, for what purpose did God create us? Is it time or something else?**

→ *Just as He is eternal, God created his people for eternity, not for time!!*

- **When we look at this passage, especially verses 11 & 14, in the context of our Community Group, what instruction and/or encouragement should we draw for ourselves as we get ready to multiply?**

**Communicate this to your group:**

"The goal of this session is to get our hearts and minds attuned to this season

of our Community Group, the season of multiplying. We must come together to rejoice in what all God has done in this small group during our past eighteen months together. We must also embrace that we cannot continue to stay together as we are if we are to continue to grow, inwardly and outwardly. We must come to realize that this Community Group experience is only one season, albeit a very important one, of many seasons that God has used and will continue to use to prepare each one of us for eternity. Using the words of Ecclesiastes, we cannot fathom what all God will do with the foundation established in this Community Group and our time together these last 18 months. But we do know that He has made everything beautiful in its time, that everything God does will endure forever, and God's name has been and will be glorified as a result of our meeting together. Our time together has had eternal significance in each of our lives, and only eternity will reveal what all was accomplished through our weekly gathering. So with that said, let's celebrate what God has done in our midst..."

→ *NOTE: You will probably not have time for all of these so pick one or two and draw out as much discussion as possible.*

- **What is one of your favorite memories from this group experience?**
- **If you could go back and do one thing differently during our time together as a group, what would it be? Why?**
- **In what ways have you grown and changed as a result of group?**
- **How did the members of this group challenge you to grow?**

→ *NOTE: Before continuing to the final question, take a few minutes to point out the growth you've seen in each member or couple in the group. Be specific. Be positive.*

- **What growth have you seen in the life of one of the other group members? How did that growth challenge and inspire you in your own spiritual journey?**

## PRAYER

Spend time praying as a group. You can gather prayer requests from each member, but also:

- *Thank God for your time together as a group, and the way he's grown each of you.*
- *Pray that the group ends well, and that you're able to make space for others to enter into community.*
- *Pray that God brings the people he wants you connect with into each of your lives.*

## WRAP UP

### **Communicate this to your group:**

Over the next several weeks we're going to be look about how God wants to use our experience in this group to impact others who aren't here yet. Its really important that you be here to be part of those conversations, because we need your input

- *NOTE: By now you should already be having off-line conversations with your group members about multiplication, and you should be developing a plan for ending well.*

## SESSION 2

### *We Belong Together*

#### GETTING STARTED

All of us have experienced how relationships change over time. It's just the nature of life. Most changes that happen are incremental and incidental. However, some changes happen due to crises or choices.

#### CONNECTING

- *Open with these few ice-breaker questions to begin the Community Group members thinking about the nature of changing relationships.*
- **Who was your best friend in high school? What was your friendship built around?**
- **How has your relationship changed since then? How do you feel about that change?**

#### GROWING

##### **Communicate this to your group:**

As we can see all relationships change over time. Our goal as a Community Group from the beginning was to be a part of God's plan for multiplication and to eventually launch a new Community Group. As we discussed last week, the time has come for us to prepare ourselves for this change. This week we will



be looking at how we as believers have a special bond like that of no other community on this earth, as well as what makes that bond so special – that is who is head of our community.

→ *Volunteer to read Romans 12:3-5*

Context: Romans 12 is an important chapter for Christian living. It begins (verses 1&2) with an emphasis on honoring God by transformed living. Transformed living happens when a believer, empowered by the Holy Spirit, changes the way he or she thinks about life. This renewing of the mind allows the believer to see life from God's perspective instead of his or her own. This new perspective allows you to know God's will.

- **According to verses 3-5, how did God create us to live this transformed life—alone or in community with other transformed people?**

- **Practically speaking, how does that work (Christians living together in community)?**

→ *Not thinking more highly of ourselves than we ought, but understanding that we are all individual members with different functions living within one body and purpose. That one body is headed only by Christ and it is purposed to bring him glory.*

- **How many different states are we from in just this Community Group? How many different denominations have we been part of?**

- **We don't have to look far (the evening news) to see that relationships in the world are characterized by strife, disagreement, disunity, prejudice, and fighting. How is the church (universal) supposed to be different from the world when its different members come together?**

### **Communicate this to your group:**

Our goal at Pleasant Valley is not just to be an organization, but to become a living organism where every part of what we do works together as a single unit. This includes each individual Community Group seeing itself as one member of a single body that includes other Community Groups, youth and children's ministries, worship team, and our missions and support ministries.

But how does this team mentality of everyone worshiping, learning, serving, together in fellowship work? *In Christ*.

One of Paul's most used phrases is "in Christ". This phrase carries a foundational identity issue for every Christian. It notes who we belong to, who we serve, who we worship, and the source of all of our being.

→ *Read Ephesians 4:1-6 for support of this idea.*

#### **▪ How does being "in Christ" help the many followers become one body?**

→ *Because we serve an exclusive God, we are to be an exclusive people that follow after him in unity. Refer back to Ephesians 4:1-6, 15-16.*

*Each member belongs all to the others.*

#### **▪ What does it mean to belong to a team?**

#### **▪ How does it feel to see a team and not belong to it?**

→ *Illustration: a player on a championship team that never gets to actually play on the field or court.*

#### **▪ What does it mean to feel like you belong to a church/Community Group?**

- **What does it feel like to be a member of a church/Community Group, but not really belong?**

**Communicate this to your group:**

God did not create us to live in isolation. He is a relational God, and therefore as his image bearers, we are relational people. But we cannot exist in community as Christians unless we take on the characteristics of Christ – love, selflessness, humility, gentleness, and patience. And together, we as many members show the world, the One True God in Christ.

- **Our church is made up of many Community Groups, but we are one body. What does our choosing to multiply indicate about our commitment to the broader Pleasant Valley body?**

→ *We are part of a bigger family than just our Community Group. This Community Group gives us a place to stay connected and have a broader impact on others. The mission of our Community Group is a secondary subset of the overall mission of our church – we are the hands and feet of “a place where people really matter.”*

- **As a Community Group, we belong to each other. How will this fact remain the same when we multiply?**

→ *We’ve invested a lot in each other, that investment will continue to pay off even though as a whole we will not be meeting together every week. Our relationships are broader than this Community Group. Remember our discussion last week on our being created for eternity, not time – this includes our relationships with our brothers and sisters.*

- **Why is it important to keep our identity “in Christ” rather than in a church or in a Community Group?**

- *We must keep our priority on our Savior and his plan to disciple the nations. If our priority is on our specific Community Group, or even Westside Family Church, then we become blinded to the big picture of Jesus' Great Commission.*

## PRAYER

- *Have the group close by everyone saying a sentence prayer finishing this sentence:*

*"Lord, as we prepare to multiply as a Community Group please help/show me \_\_\_\_\_.*

## SESSION 3

### *Jesus' Model of Reproduction*

## GETTING STARTED

#### **Communicate this to your group:**

"Last week we began to talk more directly about how our Community Group can prepare to multiply. Specifically, we addressed how in the church each of us belong to one another – nothing can change that. Our multiplying simply means that we are moving into a new phase of our relationships; a phase focused on being 'in Christ' and fulfilling His purpose and mission together as a part of our church."

- **How has God used our discussion the last two sessions to spur your thinking about our group multiplication?**

→ *Facilitate these few ice-breaker questions to begin the Community Group members thinking about the nature of changing relationships.*

- **If you have children, how did you feel when you learned you were pregnant? [Or, if you have no children, how would you feel if you learned that you were pregnant this week?]**

→ *Scared, anxious, cautious, joyous, excited, overwhelmed.*

- **In what ways has our discussion of multiplication stirred similar feelings? Are you more scared/anxious, or excited/enthusiastic?**

## GROWING

### **Communicate to your group:**

Every type of species on this planet, at some point in its existence, reproduces. Part of living is reproducing! Community Groups, churches, disciples, are no different...if they are truly alive, than they reproduce – it is the way God designed it. We'll be looking at a couple of Jesus' teachings this evening as he addresses the necessity and the process of multiplying as his disciples.

→ *Have a volunteer read John 12:23-28*

Context: John 12-16 presents for us some of Jesus' last teachings to his disciples after they have entered Jerusalem, before his arrest and crucifixion.

- **In his effort to help his disciples come to grips with the requirement of his own death, what's the message Jesus is communicating to them in this passage?**

- **In the context of our Community Group multiplying, how can we apply what Jesus is teaching his disciples here about dying so as to live?**

→ *We see from this passage that Jesus himself acknowledged that in order for God's Kingdom to be advanced, something must die in order to truly live. The disciples didn't want to accept this, but this was the Father's will, it would happen so that the Father would be glorified. We as a Community Group, must die to ourselves and our present comfort of being with people we know and are close to, so that others may come into God's family.*

→ Have a volunteer read John 14:10-12.

- **What kind of admission is Jesus making in this passage about what his followers will do after he has returned to the Father?**

→ *That they will do GREATER things!*

- **What is the parallel between the admonition that Jesus gave to his disciples in this passage about doing even greater things than him, and how it applies to the church today? Even our Community Group?**

→ *We see in this passage that Jesus knew fully his purpose from the Father, and the role that His followers would play in continuing that purpose, doing those things that Jesus did and even greater things. Since the ministry of Jesus, God has chosen, by His grace and mercy, to use humanity to spread his gospel and advance his Kingdom. And since that time, He has chosen for some things to pass and/or die so that in the end, His Kingdom would be advanced – Christ himself is the ultimate example of this. Therefore, we must embrace as a Community Group, the way in which God works to advance His will and purpose in us individually, as a Community Group, and as a church.*

→ Have a volunteer read John 15:1-8

- **When you think of pruning, what are your first thoughts? Are they positive or negative?**
- **What happens, according to verse 2, to those branches that bear fruit? Does it seem optional to bear fruit?**
- **How do we interpret this idea of pruning in the context of our Community Group? If we are to remain fruitful, individually and as a Community Group, what two things must happen?**

▪ **What is the end result of our pruning, according to verse 8?**

- *Remaining in Christ, the True Vine, is the only way we can produce any fruit. But just because we are in Him and even being fruitful, this doesn't mean that we won't be pruned, because pruning brings even more fruitfulness. God doesn't prune that which does not bear fruit, (he cuts them off), He prunes that which is fruitful. Therefore, in the context of our Community Group multiplying, we should look on it as God blessing our current fruitfulness, and remaining faithful to His desire and purpose for us to be even more fruitful. In the end, God will be glorified through our increased fruitfulness through multiplying, we will be shown as His disciples.*

**Communicate this to your group:**

We've talked a lot this session about the necessity to do things that are uncomfortable and seemingly negative (dying, pruning) if we are to follow Jesus' model for multiplying disciples.

- **What are some of the challenges you face, personally, with the outlook of our Community Group's pruning? Do you look forward to it? Are you reluctant?**
- **What can you do to make this pruning/multiplying process as healthy as possible, where others are edified and God is glorified?**

## PRAYER TIME

- *During this time, general matters should be addressed, such as wisdom for the leaders, openness of the existing members, God's drawing of additional members, logistics on meeting for both Community Groups, etc. But also, this prayer time should also be used to lift up specific issues/anxieties related to the multiplication, such as any particular person's struggle with the whole idea of multipli-*



*cation, the new season that a specific relationship is entering into as a result of the multiplication, specific people that should be invited to one of the Community Groups. This prayer time should be followed with some fellowship.*

## WRAP UP

### **Communicate this to your group:**

"I want to thank each of you for how you've invested your time and energy in this group. It's been a privilege to you during this season. It's been great watching you grow in your relationship with Jesus, and that's helped me to grow in my relationship with him."

- *At this point, communicate clear next steps. How and when will the group multiply? Who is responsible for taking what actions? Make sure this session ends with a clarity about what happens next.*

