

Session 1: Why community groups?

Read Ephesians 2:1-10

What does this passage say about our state before Jesus saved us vs. after Jesus saved us?

| Before | After |
|--------|-------|
| | |

Read Ephesians 2:11-22

What does this passage say about our state before Jesus saved us vs. after Jesus saved us?

| Before | After |
|--------|-------|
| | |



Flow: Church > church > community group

Read Ephesians 5:25–32

What is the Church?

“The church is the community of all true believers for all time.” – Wayne Grudem¹

The church is most typically referred to as the called-out assembly. . . the passive concept of “called out” underscores the fact that this community is formed by the Word. It does not come together as an aggregate of individuals who have determined to form such a society, but is summoned, gathered, and called out by God’s electing, redeeming, justifying, and renewing grace. Ecclesiology is not a topic that exists alongside the gospel, which needs to be related somehow to it. Rather, the gospel itself, as God’s saving speech act. . . generates a community called the church. The attributes, marks, and mission of the church therefore form the threads of a single bolt of fabric that is woven by the Spirit through the gospel as it is delivered through Christ’s appointed means. – Michael Horton²

What is the church?

In the New Testament, the word “church” may be used to refer to a group of believers at any level, ranging from a very small group meeting in a private home (“the church in their house,” Rom. 16:5), to the church in an entire city (“the church of God that is in Corinth,” 1 Cor. 1:2), to the church in an entire region (“the church throughout all Judea,” Acts 9:31), to the church throughout the entire world (“Christ loves the church,” Eph. 5:25). “The community of God’s people considered at any level can rightly be called a church.”³

Despite the broad range, we typically use “church” to refer to a local congregation, a specific group of people who participate in the universal Church but who group up in a place based on shared belief, distinctives, and practices, and who are organized under pastors and other leaders (ex. deacons).

Church as organization or organism?

“The Church as an institution or organization. . . is a means to an end, and this is found in the Church as an organism, the community of believers.” – Louis Berkhof⁴

› Example: tomato on a trellis

¹ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 853.

² Michael Horton, *The Christian Faith*, 828.

³ Grudem, 857-58.

⁴ Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 567.



What does the church do?

Three-fold, three-directional mission:⁵

1. Ministry to God: worship
2. Ministry to believers: nurture
3. Ministry to the world: evangelism and mercy

The mission of Vintage Church:

Vintage Church exists to make much of Jesus. We do that by making disciples who know the gospel, live the gospel, and advance the gospel.

Doubters, seekers, and followers are invited to become everything God designed them to be and see their city become everything God desires it to be.

Aside: Can a church be made up of doubters, seekers, and followers?

1. Church invisible vs. church visible: “The invisible church is the church as God sees it. . the visible church is the church as Christians on earth see it.”⁶
 - a. The church proper is only made up of those who profess faith in Christ.
 - b. However, the church always has nonbelieving members.
2. New Testament evidence: Acts 2:46-47; 10:33.
 - a. Conclusion: the church is true to her mission when nonbelievers are present

What is a community group?

Our mission at Vintage is to make much of Jesus, and one of the ways we do that is through community groups. Community groups are small groups of people who gather during the week in living rooms across the city. At these gatherings, groups discuss the Bible together, they build friendships to talk honestly and share their lives with each other, and they love and serve their surrounding communities, both as a group and as individuals, to make much of Jesus wherever he’s placed them. Each group does this differently as unique representations of the community we have in Jesus.

Three-fold mission of community groups:

1. Know the Gospel: study scripture together
2. Live the Gospel: share our lives together
3. Advance the Gospel: love and serve our surrounding communities together

⁵ Grudem, 867-68.

⁶ Grudem, 855-56.



Community Group Structure

Vintage Community Groups are small groups of people who discuss the Bible together, share their lives together, and live like missionaries together.

- Structure
 - Led by Vintage member(s)
 - 5-20 people
 - Hosted in homes
 - Not grouped by affinity, age, life stage, or location
 - Grow organically and through the Connections Process
 - Multiply by planting other Community Groups
- Priorities
 - Make disciples (Matthew 28:16-20):
 - Know the Gospel: Learning from the Bible together
 - Live the Gospel: Sharing our lives together
 - Advance the Gospel: Living on mission together
 - Doubter, seeker, and follower friendly
- Accountability
 - Organizational: Leaders > Coaches > Community Groups Director > Executive Pastor > Board of Elders
 - Spiritual: Members > Deacons > Elders > Jesus

Coaching

Community Group Coaches are put in place to assist, care for, and help shepherd community group leaders. They're there to help you be supported you in your role, connected with church leadership, and growing in faithfulness and fellowship with the church.

Expect monthly meetings with your coach initially to establish a coaching relationship, followed by regular but less frequent check ins (you and your coach can work out the frequency that is most helpful for you). Your coach is available to assist or connect you to resources as needed.

