

*A Basic Guide To*  
**CITY**   
**GROUPS**

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# What & Why?

## What is a City Group?

A City Group is a small- to mid-sized community that is centered on Jesus - whether the members already believe in Jesus or are discovering who Jesus is. You can think of a City Group as a missionary family, a group of people who love and support and care for one another while intentionally praying for and pursuing a shared mission.

## What is the Purpose of City Groups?

City Groups exist to multiply disciples of Jesus! The purpose of City Groups is bigger than just connection, bigger than just learning new things, and better than just another thing to add to your calendar.

We believe that discipleship will happen within a City Group as it grows in our core values:

- 1. DOWN and UP.** As City Group members gather to study, pray, worship, read Scripture, and consider how the gospel impacts their lives, they will discover the joy of being a part of a community centered on Jesus.
- 2. IN.** As City Group members connect with one another, hear each others' stories, share meals together, and build friendships, they will experience the love of God through one another and show the love of God to one another.
- 3. OUT.** As City Group members intentionally serve a neighborhood, network, or organization together, people in our city will witness a community that lives out the gospel in practical ways.

The core values combine to facilitate a group of people becoming more and more like Jesus! Our hope is that those within our Sunday gatherings will grow in knowing Jesus and following Jesus, while those who are de-churched or un-churched will be drawn to our community and come to know Jesus. The ultimate goal of any City Group is to glorify God by making disciples of Jesus!

## Who Can Belong to a City Group?

Anyone! City Groups are the DNA of our church, and yet they are communities that people can belong to before they believe. This means that City Groups are a reflection of our entire church and are comprised of mature Christians, new Christians, and non-Christians. We want everyone connected to Citylight Council Bluffs to be in a City Group because that is where disciples are made and multiplied.

## What is Our Vision for City Groups?

We envision City Groups launching and loving throughout the city of Council Bluffs and the towns of South West Iowa. As City Groups multiply, we envision more people finding a family to belong to, a cause to live for, and a Savior to believe in! As those people come together, our prayer is that both disciples and churches will multiply in our region.

# Leaders

When Jesus looked at crowds of people who did not know Him, He encouraged his closest disciples this way:

*The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. Luke 10:2*

Laborers are leaders. And when we look out over Council Bluffs, our foremost prayer is not that Jesus will draw a big crowd on Sunday mornings or make us a big church, but that Jesus would raise up and send out leaders who will multiply disciples! This is why City Group Leaders are so precious to our church and so powerful in the ministry of Jesus in Council Bluffs.

Leaders, you matter! You are an answer to prayer, called by Jesus, and empowered by Him to host people, lead discussions, pray with people, and help those in your City Group become more like Jesus.

## Who Leads a City Group?

City Groups are led by leadership teams of 4-8 people who are committed to share the responsibility of living out the 4 core values together. We don't want any one person or couple to lead a City Group alone. Instead, just as Jesus sent out teams on mission together, we want to empower teams to lead together.

**We want the leaders of City Groups to have the following characteristics:**

- 1. Love Jesus!** You love Jesus and committed to being his disciple. You pursue Jesus by spending time with Him in the Scriptures on a regular basis and responding to his daily leadership in your life.
- 2. Committed to Citylight Council Bluffs.** You celebrate what God is doing among our church and are committed to be a part of it.
- 3. Gifted and Wanting to Learn.** Leaders should be gifted to lead. This doesn't mean you have to stand in front of crowds and preach a sermon. But among a leadership team, there should be leaders gifted in teaching, hospitality, serving, administration, and leadership. Discover your spiritual gifting and put it to work as you lead! At the same time, City Group leaders should be committed to the vision for City Groups and wanting to be coached in this to live out that vision.
- 4. Team Members.** You are able to gather a team and lead well with other team members to live out the vision God has for your City Group.

## How Do Teams Lead Together?

Each City Group leadership team operates differently, but many times teams tend to take shape in one of two ways:

- A. Core Values Focus.** One team member takes ownership for each value. For example, one team members owns DOWN and regularly leads discussion to help people understand the gospel in

# Leaders (Continued)

their lives; another team member owns IN and finds ways for the City Group to connect through meals, stories, or shared events; another team member owns OUT and coordinates service projects or outreach events.

- B. Gifting Focus.** Each member of the team celebrates how God has gifted him/her and leads with that gifting. For example, someone with the gift of hospitality and knowledge leads discussions; someone with the gift of administration coordinates meals and communication; someone with the gift of leadership or evangelism finds an organization to partner with and plans events.

However your team works best, we have found that there are a few indispensable roles that you won't want to forget:

- **Discussion Facilitator.** Even if you rotate who leads discussion, someone needs to own this and plan ahead. Don't show up and decide on discussion halfway through your meal. Do some preparation, plan ahead, and lead the discussion.
- **Communication and Coordination.** This is the person who loves to email or post on Facebook or text people to help the group coordinate meals, plan the calendar, and keep things moving!
- **OUT leader.** It's easy for your group's OUT to fall behind the rest of the values. Have someone lead out in this area, remind the group of this value, and make it happen!

# Down & Up

The vision of City Groups is to multiply disciples of Jesus by living out our 4 core values. The first set of values is DOWN and UP. In many ways, these values go together. God came DOWN to us in the person and work of Jesus Christ, so we respond UP to Him by faith in Jesus. God comes DOWN to us and lives in us through the Holy Spirit, and we respond UP to Him by being led by the Spirit. DOWN and UP often go hand-in-hand. One leads to the other!

So in a City Group, we pray that people will pursue God and grow in their love for Jesus. This may sound simple, but in our fallen world, people seek to become their own gods. We often seek to live apart from God, preferring our independence over a relationship with our Creator and Redeemer. But through the gospel, Jesus transforms our hearts and moves us to a place where we recognize God as King, Father, and Savior! It becomes our joy to know, obey, serve, and worship Him.

**But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners,  
Christ died for us.  
Romans 5:8**

## **What Does DOWN/UP Look Like in a City Group?**

These are values, so they might look different in each group. But we encourage every City Group to pick from three options:

- **Bible study together.** Choosing a book of the Bible and walking through it over the course of 6 weeks.
- **Sermon Discussion Questions.** We will post sermon discussion questions each Monday afternoon. Your group might choose to stick to the sermons and help take the message into real life through application.
- **Video Curriculum.** Our church has a membership to RightNowMedia.org so that you as leaders can choose curriculum and lead discussions based on that curriculum. There are hundreds of topics or texts to choose from!

# Team Discussion

**What does DOWN/UP look like in my life?**

**What do we want DOWN/UP to look like in our City Group?**

The vision of City Groups is to multiply disciples of Jesus by living out our 4 core values. The next value is OUT. This is where and how we connect to one another. In a City Group, we learn to love one another. This means accepting one another as God in Christ accepted us, forgiving one another just as God forgave us, bearing each other's burdens, praying for each other, and listening to one another.

As love roots down and grows up in a City Group, it becomes contagious to friends and family, neighbors and coworkers who hear about the group. So another aspect of IN is that any new person who shows up is never left out. The City Group celebrates newcomers and makes them feel welcome from the moment they're invited or walk in.

**By this all people will know that you are my disciples,  
if you have love for one another.**

John 13:35

### **What Does IN Look Like for a City Group?**

City Groups have expressed this core value in many ways! Here are some of the most common and effective ways that groups have grown in love for one another:

- **Sharing life stories.**
- **Front-burner discussions.**
- **Eating together.**
- **Playing together.**

## Team Discussion

**What will IN look like in our City Group?**

**How will we eat together? Think through what (full meals, potlucks, desserts-only, appetizers only, etc.) and who will coordinate the group meal schedule.**

# Out

The vision of City Groups is to multiply disciples of Jesus by living out our 4 core values. The next value is OUT. Just as the love of God brings us in together, it also compels us OUT to share that love with our friends, family, neighbors, and coworkers. This means that we are a family on God's mission together. It's a blessing and joy to get to be part of what God is doing in our city and region!

In fact, Citylight Church doesn't have a missions department; instead, we have City Groups that each have a mission together! These groups get to be a light to the world, a city on a hill, and ambassadors of Christ to those around them.

**You are the light of the world.  
A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.  
Matthew 5:14**

## **What Does OUT Look Like for a City Group?**

There is no one required way to live out this value! Here are some of the most common and effective ways that groups have grown in love for one another:

- **Loving the neighborhood.** For example, block parties, Neighborhood Association, NextDoor app, gifts to neighbors.
- **Connecting with a network.** For example, realtors, educators, refugees, students, etc.
- **Partnering with an organization, school, or city leadership.** For example, Lewis and Clark Elementary, Peterson Park, Trailblazers.

## **How Often Do We Go OUT?**

We recommend aiming to practice your OUT once every 4-6 weeks! This keeps the value as part of the regular rhythms of your City Group.

# Team Discussion

**What does OUT look like in my life right now?**

**What will OUT look like for our City Group?**

**Who will run point in planning and promoting our OUT?**



# Multiply

City Groups are a crucial part of the mission of Citylight Church! And that mission is to multiply disciples and churches for the glory of Jesus. From the beginning God has called his people to multiply. The Old Testament people of God and the New Testament church were both characterized by multiplication. We want this passion to multiply to be a part of each of our City Groups, but often multiplying is new to people. We hope these questions and answers help your City Group begin and grow with a DNA of multiplication.

**And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply....”**  
Genesis 1:28

**But the word of God increased and multiplied.**  
Acts 12:24

## **When Should We Multiply?**

We encourage groups to multiply based on leadership - not size. Many groups try to “split” when they reach a certain size that feels too big, but the split usually doesn’t work well. Instead, as City Group leaders we encourage you to invest in future leaders in your group and multiply those leaders out as soon as they are ready.

## **How Should We Multiply?**

Start talking about the value of multiplying already. Let your City Group know that multiplying is a joyful part of any family, and the same is true for your City Group. Then, as future leaders emerge, give them opportunities to lead discussion, coordinate one of the core values, and become visible leaders. Then once those leaders are ready, invite those in your group to pray about either going with the new leaders to launch a new City Group or staying in the current group. As God leads, let people follow Him to either the new group or existing group.

## **How Do We Identify Leaders?**

Leaders come in many different styles and flavors. At the core of a leader, though, are three characteristics:

- **Humble.** A healthy leader knows that Jesus is way greater than they are, and they show it by listening and learning. Invite emerging leaders to coaching meetings, give them lots of encouragement, and look for those who love to listen!
- **Hungry.** A healthy leader has a desire for Jesus to shape his/her whole life. Look for people who are genuinely interacting with the Bible and the Spirit and experiencing change in their lives. Plus, hungry people show up consistently to your City Group meetings.
- **People smart.** A healthy leader knows how to interact with others. They don’t dominate conversation and they know how to encourage others. Don’t look for the loudest or most self-confident people; but look for those who attract others around them because they love well and bless others.