

COMMUNITY GROUP LEADER HANDBOOK

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INTRODUCTION AND TRAINING



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WELCOME TO LEADERSHIP

Veritas Church exists for the fame of Jesus. Our desire is to make disciples who are for the city, for the military and for the fame of Jesus who love God, love people and advance the gospel.

Gospel-centered community is expressed when people who value genuine, real and authentic relationships strive together to see their lives changed by the power of the gospel. The goal is to see community groups as the basic unit for this community, but it can only be achieved if group leaders are growing in the vibrancy and maturity of their faith. This training is an attempt to walk through both the theological and practical implications of spiritual leadership. We will begin with a foundational understanding of the gospel because your group must come together around the gospel, and it is your role as a leader to set that perception from day one. The rest of the materials covered are designed to give you:

- An accurate vocabulary from which to communicate
- Efficient tools to help you lead
- A consistent direction to pursue
- A correct understanding of how and why community groups exist

Perspective

To discuss the place of community groups within the life of the church, we see through a gospel lens. God has been about His glory throughout history and has worked to bring about the redemption of a people – through Jesus Christ – for His namesake. If God has been working toward a goal, it's good for us to know why and how. He's on mission, and He's called us to be part of it as the Church.

The Mission of God

All things exist and are being worked according to the triune God's passion, pleasure and plan (Eph. 1:11), which is the demonstration of His own intrinsic glory. God creates, calls, rescues, redeems, saves, restores, restrains and grants all to the end that He might be praised.

His desire, which He will surely fulfill, is that the knowledge of His glory would cover the earth as the waters do the sea (Hab. 2:14). God's mission is the manifestation of His magnificence. His mission is glory.

What is the glory of God? The glory of God is the gravity that keeps those who see and savor it from spinning off into the spacious trivialities of sin. God's desire is that He might be known and enjoyed for His nature and character. He seeks to be recognized as supremely valuable, supremely worthy and supremely splendid. God's glory is sensed when we feel the reality of His presence, goodness and superiority.

- Isaiah 48:9-11, Ephesians 1:3-14, Isaiah 43:6-7, Ezekiel 20:14



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The Mission of the Church

The mission of the Church universal is to glorify God by making disciples through the gospel of Jesus Christ.

God's mission and the mission of His Church are inseparably linked. If God's mission is to be glorified through the redemption and reconciliation of a people, the Church's mission must orient around the glory of God and seek to glorify Him through redemption and reconciliation.

The mission of the Church is highlighted in 2 Corinthians 5. As those who have been reconciled to God through the gospel of Jesus Christ, we are now ambassadors of reconciliation to a lost and broken world. We plead, urge, implore, reason, pray, serve, preach, teach and gather to see God glorified through reconciliation.

The Mission of Veritas Church

At Veritas, the means by which we pursue the glory of God in the making of disciples is by loving God, loving people and advancing the gospel for the city, for the military and, most importantly, for the fame of Jesus.



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OUR HOPE FOR COMMUNITY GROUPS

We encourage our church to be involved in the lives of others, but what does this mean for our daily choices and actions? Is it merely hanging out and discussing the latest fashions or last weekend's sports scores? Community often begins with a shared interest, and for the believer, it begins with a shared identity.

We often see community as a thing – a sought-for commodity that can be attained – but this is not what we mean. Gospel-centered community is a people – a group of individuals who come together with the sole purpose of making much of Jesus. It can start by our hanging out with others, but it takes shape when daily opportunities for shared experience and life become the norm. There is a rhythm of life that involves, invites and seeks out the good of those known by people in the community. Conversations, dinners and trips all have the rich fabric of how Christ and Scripture affect our daily lives. In a world where instant communication keeps us moving, we gain depth through relationships that help us stay accountable for living lives that reflect God's impact on us.

Why is it important that we see community as a people and not a place or thing? Because we have been made a people by God, and He has been working to help us see this. We are His in Christ Jesus, and before we can wrap our minds around being made in His image, we need to see that He died to make us His. Our response of love and worship to this reality is what binds us together as His people. How it plays out among us is the gift of God for our lives together.

The joy we find through deep friendships in Christ is a gift from God that models Him in the world. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit have dwelt in perfect unity, love and joy before and throughout time. God is glorified when He is reflected, and we reflect Him by living together in unity. The hope for groups is that we would not simply spend time with each other, but that we would act with intention to cultivate and strengthen deep relationships founded on God's love for us.



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MESSAGE OF RECONCILIATION: THE GOSPEL

Scripture establishes two frames of reference for the same gospel. We call these vantage points the “ground” and “air.” On the ground, at the micro level, is the biblical narrative of God, man, Christ and response. This is the story of grace for human transformation. The air is the macro level where human salvation is connected to cosmic restoration (Rom. 8:22-23). It is the overarching story of God’s work in creation, fall, reconciliation and consummation. Both understandings point to the supremacy of Christ and the grace of God in saving a people to Himself.

The Gospel on the Ground

- God (Rom. 11:33-36; 1 Cor. 3:18-23; Job 38:2-4)
- Man (Gen. 3; Rom. 1:16-29; Luke 12:4-5; Eph. 2:1-3)
- Christ (Rom. 3:21-28; Luke 22:20; Heb. 2:14-17; Heb. 9:24-28)
- Response (Rom. 10:9, 12, 13; Acts 2:42-47)

The Gospel in the Air

- Creation (Gen. 1:31; 6:11-13; John 1:1-3; Rom. 8:18-24)
- Fall (Gen. 3:17-19, 23-24; Ecc. 2:17-21; Rom. 7:21-24)
- Reconciliation (Matt. 27:45-54; Rom. 8:21-22; 2 Cor. 5:17-20; Eph. 2:1-7)
- Consummation (Isa. 65:17; Rev. 21:1-4, 23; 1 Cor. 15:35-45)



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MEANS OF RECONCILIATION: COMMUNITY

We were made for community. The model for our community is that of the triune God, but because of the fall, our ability to know each other has been fractured. Instead of innately getting along, looking out for others and living in healthy relationships, we turn our eyes inward, and sin distorts our priorities and views towards others. It hinders our ability to love and care for others and to receive the love and care of the Lord. The gospel restores this ability through a new heart and mind, enabling us to live in community and model God's grace within our daily lives. See Appendix A.

The Fracture and the Need (Gen. 3)

The Community of the Trinity

Within God's very nature is a divine 'rhythm' or pattern of continuous giving and receiving- not only love, but also glory, honor, life...each in its fullness. - Tim Keller

Spheres of Community: Public, Social, Personal and Intimate

The four spheres describe an organic harmony, a rhythm for helping people search for and build their community.

Marks of Gospel-Centered Community

Genuine and authentic - We consistently work to tear down dividing walls that we erect out of pride, embarrassment, fear, isolation, individualism and sin.

Safe - We confess our struggles, sins, doubts and shortcomings and share in our sufferings and joys.

Intentional - We fight together, applying God's Word, helping the poor, reaching the lost and loving on each other.

Gospel In and Out (Eph. 4: 11-15; 2 Cor. 5:16-21)

Gospel-centered community is the body in action and on mission.



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MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION: DISCIPLESHIP

The Mission for the Believer: The Great Commission

God's mission on earth is to enjoy, display and share His glory by creating, redeeming and dwelling with a people of His pleasure and His likeness. Christ is the Great Mediator between God and man (1 Tim. 2:5-6). Paul expounds on this idea in his letter to the Corinthian church. He says that in being reconciled to God through Christ, we become ministers of reconciliation.

God's Method for the Mission (Matt. 28:18-20)

Jesus gives one of the greatest charges to the Church right before ascending into heaven. He says, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." This text includes substantial implications, but baptism and teaching are the two focal points for discipleship.

Baptism

Baptism symbolizes a person's union with Christ in the likeness of His death and resurrection. It signifies that a former way of life has been put to death and depicts a release from the mastery of sin. Romans 6:3-6 says, "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the death by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin."

Teaching

Teaching plays out in two ways within the church: the expositing of the Word (biblical preaching) and the counseling of the Word (biblical counseling). Matt Chandler calls this approach "the air war" and "the ground war." If a church relies on the pastor alone for preaching and teaching of the Word, there will be significant deficiencies in the body. Equally so, if there is a neglect of expositional preaching of the Word in exchange for personal ministry, there will be deficiencies in the body.

While not all are called to be expositors of the Word, all believers are called to be apt in the truths of God so they may counsel and share God's Word with others (1 Tim. 3). The God-designed picture for holistic discipleship exists when the church preaches the whole counsel of God and counsels the whole counsel of God. This creates a beautiful harmony in the body of Christ.

Elements and Definitions for Discipleship

Biblical counselor and author John Henderson says, "Discipleship is a fluid event and process, as part of the great commission, whereby one or more theologically and relationally qualified persons provide spiritual, emotional, and behavioral service, comfort, and guidance in love to one or more persons through the truth and power of God's Word under the ministry of the Holy Spirit."

There are four working characteristics of discipleship that support this definition. These help provide a clear expectation and outline to the practice and manner in which the believer counsels and cares for another with the Word of God.



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1. Discipleship is rooted in God.

Biblical discipleship relies upon God's Word for knowledge, wisdom and direction. We know God as the Creator of all things who has sovereign authority over all things. Throughout the Scriptures, we see His wisdom displayed, and our discipleship should mirror the characteristics of His counsel.

God's Word is the source for truth with which we disciple. Often within community and discipleship relationships, the Scriptures are not the primary source of wisdom. Scripture might be referenced here and there, but more as a supplemental piece than an authoritative Word. In these moments, the latest Christian book or study can become the focal point, which can be beneficial at times, but more often conveys and trains younger believers to depend on sources other than God's Word. The Word is where we go first.

Scripture is intended to be studied and applied within relationships, not terminating on the individual. The psalmist describes God's Word as a lamp to his feet and light to his path. He goes on to say, "The sum of your word is truth, and every one of your righteous rules endures forever" (Ps. 119).

2. Discipleship should always exalt Jesus Christ.

"Him [Christ] we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ" (Col. 1:28). Christ is the Great Mediator between God and mankind. Discipleship that does not exalt Jesus Christ becomes behavior modification.

3. Discipleship is dependent upon the Holy Spirit for change.

Sanctification is impossible apart from the empowering work of the Holy Spirit.

In the words of John Henderson, "Discipleship depends upon and occurs within the ministry of the Holy Spirit." When the Scriptures talk about the work being completed – justification, sanctification and glorification – it is being completed by the Holy Spirit. In 1 Corinthians 6, after listing sinful fruit of the hearts we all are born with and saved from, Paul says, "And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God." The healing of the heart has been secured by and is being worked out through the Holy Spirit.

Because the Spirit continuously works in the lives and hearts of people, we must remember that we are instruments of change in His hands. The apostle Paul writes to the Corinthian church reminding them that they are "servants of Christ" as stewards in the ministries He has called them to. A common but harmful mistake is to minister from the mindset that God needs us to do the ministry in the lives of people. The truth is that He is doing that work in their lives and invites us into that work.



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4. Discipleship is loving.

Ephesians 4 talks about speaking truth in love. Biblical discipleship necessitates truth for change. Paul is saying that truth must always be delivered in love. Godly men and women who disciple understand that love only abounds in and through them because God loved them first. “Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love” (1 John 4:8).

A failure to guide someone through the truths of God with love and understanding is a failure to walk in the love extended by God to His children. The nature of discipleship is relationship, and the conversation within that relationship must be seasoned with wisdom, sensitivity and compassion – in content and delivery (Col. 4:6).

Common Errors and the Theology of the Heart

Biblical discipleship is a heartfelt and compassionate process, but it is oftentimes approached as a sterile, systematic and emotionless process. Therefore, the disciple must provide comfort and guidance in love with spiritual, emotional and behavioral issues.

There are several errors often made within the relational dynamic:

- The discipleship relationship is void of any discussion or movement in the areas of emotional or behavioral struggles.
- You only address emotional and behavioral (circumstantial) troubles. The discussion fails to look into the spiritual implications behind them.
- You approach ministry with the mindset that you are doing the work for God, rather than God letting you be a part of what He is already doing in the lives of others.

The ministry of Christ consistently reflects the heart of God when it comes to pursuing people. Jesus constantly deals with individuals and crowds in the same way – He goes after their hearts. This is not something new. If you carefully read the whole of Scripture, you see God going after the hearts of His people at every turn.

This focus does not imply that God does not care about the symptoms and circumstances that permeate the emotional, behavioral and spiritual struggles of people. It implies that God cares so much that He goes past the presented issue to the very heart behind them. It is with love that He goes after the heart.

A biblical discipleship relationship intentionally addresses the emotional, behavioral and spiritual struggles but never without moving those issues to and towards the heart.

We see an example in Matthew 15: The disciples start eating without washing their hands. The Pharisees and scribes see this problem and bring it to Jesus. As usual, the Pharisees try to trap Him. Christ uses it to teach the people about the heart of God and how He sees things, while the religious leaders want to make the issue about a moral failure that leads to a person becoming unclean.

Jesus first responds by quoting Isaiah, “These people honor me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.” He gathers the



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people and continues on, correcting misguided sight through the lens of truth. He takes everything that would lead to a defilement of a person and shows a heart problem – not a moral, behavioral, emotional or circumstantial problem. The heart of man is what defiles him, and God alone can heal this problem.

General Discipleship Methods

There are a few key methods to approaching a biblical discipleship relationship that inspire us to walk in obedience to the Great Commission.

LOVE → DISCERN → IDENTIFY BIBLICAL SOLUTIONS → EXHORT BIBLICAL BEHAVIOR

LOVE

God is love, so we are to love others. To disciple with a Christ-centered love, consider these points:

There must be a desire to help. Our desire reveals whether we have a kingdom mindset or lack thereof. Self-centered Christianity consistently misses opportunities to minister to others in the body of Christ because individuals view the gospel incorrectly. Even when these individuals do reach out to help others, if their hearts are not ordered rightly, they do so for personal benefit. Biblical love propels us to consider others first. It's the greatest commandment. Jesus says to love God with all you are and love others as yourself. A desire to love and help others through discipleship is birthed out of a deep pursuit and love for God.

Offer your full attention. How will we know what to say if we have not heard their story? Listening attentively is to love people. No phones, no distractions – be fully present and listen. Hearing will allow the discipled to know what biblical counsel to give, which direction to take moving forward and how to intercede for others. James 1:19 says, “Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger.” The Lord hears our prayers and cares for us. How can we not, in turn, love others by listening to their stories?

We must show compassion. In Hebrews, the author portrays Jesus as One who sympathizes with our weakness and is able to help because He suffered and was tempted in every way. Christ knows our weakness and remembers it when He deals with us. No human can ever fully understand another in order to offer complete help and care; therefore, we strive to emulate the example of Christ by laboring to understand the struggles and suffering of people. In laboring to understand, we show care and compassion.

Throughout the New Testament, we see Christ look upon the people with compassion. There is a deep love, concern and care expressed in the descriptions of Jesus seeing and approaching the people. This compassion continually propelled Him to minister to their needs. Philippians 2 says that He was obedient in this even unto death.

Foundation: Uphold the Truth. Ephesians 4 talks about speaking the truth in love. There is a danger here that shows itself in two extremes. On the one hand, a person bent toward mercy has trouble speaking direct truth to someone in fear of offending that person. On the other hand, a person who excels in seeing truth and delivering it to someone might lack love and then become a noisy, annoying cymbal according to 1 Corinthians 13. It is important to note that moving from counseling in the truth for the sake of showing compassion or care is unloving.



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It would be like watching someone walk towards the edge of a cliff but, because you don't want to upset that person, not telling them about the edge of the cliff.

DISCERN

We must discern as Christ discerned. It is helpful to hear how an individual defines problems and struggles. It is tempting to immediately jump in and either define the problem yourself or correct the definition of the problem without fully hearing the story. Over time, carefully and graciously help individuals look at their hurts and struggles in light of Scripture. This approach will help bring fertile ground and a willing spirit to how they are thinking, feeling and behaving in response to their struggle or suffering.

As this approach progresses, the person being disciplined will begin to view and discuss their troubles through the lenses of God's Word. With this, the individual's thinking, feeling and behaving are, in turn, filtered through truth rather than circumstances, sufferings or problems. This progression frees the disciple to see his problems in relation to the affections of his heart. In and amongst troubles and sufferings, affections will be exposed as either affections for self or affections for Christ. These misplaced affections will constantly point to deeper heart issues.

IDENTIFY BIBLICAL SOLUTIONS

Through hearing and discerning, we look to Scripture that speaks adequately to the heart and circumstance.

If discernment toward the heart is skipped and you jump straight into biblical solutions, there becomes a danger of behavior being addressed without true heart change that comes through the Holy Spirit, as God's Word impacts the heart. This may seem like a small thing, but biblical solutions apart from a good understanding of where affections of the heart have gone wrong leads to biblical behaviorism or legalism. The Pharisees and Sadducees displayed these displaced affections as they consistently approached problems with the law, but with hearts that were far from the Lord.

EXHORT BIBLICAL ENDEAVOR

Once biblical solutions are identified and studied, the discipler exhorts biblical pursuit. This includes but is not limited to exhorting the individual to:

- **Forsake allegiance to the flesh** – The individual grows in an understanding of how the flesh has traditionally played out but stays keenly aware of the heart issues beneath.
- **Trust in the power of God** – The individual grows in trust toward God's sovereignty while acknowledging and embracing the deep need to walk in His ways and actively trust in His goodness.
- **Dwell upon the gospel of Jesus Christ** – There becomes a great understanding of what has been secured in and through the gospel of Jesus Christ. Justification, sanctification and glorification are all realized in Christ and empowered through the Holy Spirit.
- **Meditate upon, memorize and apply the word of God** – There is an increased hunger for God and the desire to know His Word.
- **Seek power and comfort from the Holy Spirit** – A proper view of the Holy Spirit as part of the Godhead is embraced. This means that there is a persistent desire to grow in the knowledge of the Spirit, walk in the power of the Spirit, and seek the Spirit in all things.
- **Engage fully in the body of Christ** – A great failure of many believers has been looking outside the body of Christ for care and help. This exposes a great failure of the Church to not be a place and people who pursue authentic, biblical Christianity. As the Church strives to be an instrument of God to His people, the individual should be encouraged to engage the body of Christ.



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- Wait patiently upon the Lord and His timing – A failure to trust God is a failure to trust in His Sovereignty.

SPECIFIC DISCIPLESHIP METHODS

God has given us everything we need in His Word for ministering to His people. In walking with and discipling people, we see a variety of personalities, characteristics and outworkings in people. The general methods of discipleship provide a broad foundation for the holistic care for an individual. The specific methods give context to the varying ways people need to be engaged in each context.

Admonish or Warn

Admonishment is a warning from the present course, specifically pertaining to all believers. There is an impartation of wisdom involved with corrective influence. Admonishment is lovingly delivered with the understanding that movement toward the heart is necessary and not just behavior modification. It is especially suited for the unruly believer. Unruliness can easily lead to divisiveness, which can lead to factions. Admonishment is the call in these cases, but notice what 1 Thessalonians 5:14 says: “And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle [unruly or disorderly], encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all.”

When to Admonish

When a fellow believer is walking in rebellion or has a deceived heart, the call is to admonish or warn. This individual might not fully realize the deceit or rebellion they are walking in, but they have been given or know truth which they openly choose to not walk in or submit to. They actively turn their back on truth and head the opposite direction of godly living. They are living for and embracing their own kingdom above all others.

→ 1 Thessalonians 5:14; 2 Timothy 2:24-26

Teach

Teaching is relational. We cannot treat it like a Google search, downloading information to be read later. Within the New Testament, instruction exists through a teacher and student relationship. It involves a sense of diligence, consistency and apprehension of a subject.

When to Teach

Immaturity and ignorance are markers for the calling to teach. On this side of heaven, there will always be an ignorance about us and the need to grow in godliness. In the maturation of the believer, patience is required – similar to how it is required of parents with an infant (Heb. 5:1-3). As ministers of the gospel, there will always be the need to teach others and to receive teaching in the things of God.

→ Hebrews 5:12; 1 Timothy 4:11, 6:2

Exhortation

Biblically, exhortation means to call near, make an appeal, beseech, urge, invite or comfort. It means to earnestly ask for something. There can be an urgency and pleading associated with exhorting. Paul is famous for his exhortations. He had a heartfelt, compassionate urgency because he knew what was at stake. He had a deep love for God’s people and a desire to see them walk in maturity and fullness. Galatians 4:12 shows Paul urgently entreating with the Galatians to walk more like Christ. He isn’t shaming them or scolding them. His love for them comes out in this exhortation.

When to Exhort

People get stuck for a variety of reasons in their pursuit of God. Exhortation is the call when leadership and motivation are missing. The minister of the gospel should lovingly come alongside this person and



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encourage them in truth. This is gentle, non- corrective and one of the more consistent methods of discipleship.

→ Matthew 9:36; Mark 6:34; 2 Timothy 1:6-7

When to Bear Patiently

When someone is weak or overburdened, the call is to bear patiently. The realities of a fallen world will, from time to time, press up against people around us. Our opportunity is to come alongside them and minister by bearing their burden spiritually, mentally, emotionally and physically.

→ Colossians 3:13

Encourage

And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. (Hebrews 10:24-25)

The author of Hebrews calls believers to thoughtfully and intentionally encourage, console and build up. This is a contextually specific and well-timed word to bring refreshment and strength to the soul of another.

When to Encourage

When a person is in pursuit of God but stuck because of an obstacle in the way, encourage that person. This obstacle might be the flesh or spiritual in nature. Fear is also often at play in these situations. Encouragement rooted in God's truth can help lead someone out of fear and into trust.

→ Proverbs 12:25; Philippians 4:4-9; 1 Peter 5:6-7

Comfort

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. (2 Corinthians 1:3-4)

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. (Psalm 23:4)

The character of this comfort comes from the Lord. The comfort extended comes from a heart that has received God's comfort, which allows us to comfort because we have been comforted.

When to Comfort

Comfort those who are grieving a loss and in a hopeless state. Death, loss and suffering can come out of nowhere and debilitate the recipient of such pain. Job's friends offer a helpful example of comfort initially after he loses everything precious to him. They join around him and sit in silence with him to comfort him for seven days and seven nights. They literally sit in the ashes with him, while he mourns and grieves his loss. There is often pressure felt by the minister to say the right thing at the right time, but the simple ministry of presence in these moments can be a mighty act of grace toward the hurting.



GROUPS GUIDE



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PROVIDING CARE THROUGH COMMUNITY GROUP LIFE

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|-----------|--------|--------|------------|------------|------------|
| PRIMARY | Group | Leader | Hub Leader | Pastor | Pastor |
| SECONDARY | Leader | Coach | Leader | Hub Leader | Hub Leader |

The following stages of conflict, struggles and sin within groups define the processes of pastors, coaches and leaders in providing care and counseling.

Stage 1

- . Problem - Individual confesses a conflict or struggle
- . Resolution
 - . Persons involved: group (primary), leader (secondary)
 - . Action: Group and group leader respond with truth and encourage individual to trust the Spirit for guidance and deliverance while continuing to walk in community.

Stage 2

- . Problem - Individual confesses secret sin, or secret sin is exposed
- . Resolution
 - . Persons involved: leader (primary), hub leader (secondary)
 - . Action - Group leader walks alongside individual as he or she seeks healing and freedom and informs group of additional steps (Steps, biblical counseling, etc.)

Stage 3

- . Problem - Individual confesses grievous sin - sin of significant deceit and rebellion that affects close relationships - or grievous sin is exposed.
- . Resolution
 - . Persons involved: hub leader (primary), leader (secondary)
 - . Action: Coach moves into main leadership role to provide care, counseling, and additional steps to individual (Steps, biblical counseling, etc.).

Stage 4

- . Problem - Individual continues in disobedience and/or refuses to fully submit to counsel and accountability.
- . Resolution
 - . Persons Involved: pastor (primary), hub leader (secondary)
 - . Action: Pastor works alongside coach to provide care, counseling and next steps.

Stage 5

- . Problem - Individual dismisses the counsel of the church and pursues sin without repentance.
- . Resolution
 - . Persons Involved: pastor (primary), hub leader (secondary)
 - . Action: Pastor assesses situation and gives coach further direction.



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THE SHEPHERD LEADER

Anyone vaguely familiar with the biblical narrative will recognize the rather dominant theme of shepherding.

Think about all the references to shepherding and the number of men of faith who are described in this way. Abel was a shepherd, as was Abraham, Jacob and David, just to name a few of the Old Testament figures with such responsibility. God is called a shepherd in a number of significant passages (Ps. 23, 78:52; Isa. 40:11; Ezek. 34:11-13; John 10:11; 1 Pet. 2:25) that consequently refer to His people as sheep.

Within the pages of the New Testament, the picture continues as Jesus calls His apostles to be shepherds of the Church (see particularly John 21). The apostles then give this charge to the elders (1 Pet. 5:2) of local churches who appoint various shepherds within the congregation (Eph. 4:1-15; 1 Cor. 3:2; 1 Pet. 2:2).

While certain positions (pastors, group leaders, etc.) carry an inherent responsibility to guard the flock, everyone in some sense functions as a shepherd. We are all called to watch over our families, our own lives, our friends, etc.

Few of us have much direct experience with shepherding in the farming sense.

Not many of us are consumed with thoughts of sheep, unless perhaps we are trying to sleep, so it is helpful to take a brief overview of the responsibilities of this calling. Shepherds are called to feed, protect, lead and discipline the flock they have been entrusted.

Feed

Jesus commands Peter to “feed [His] sheep” three times as proof and consequence of His love. The people we minister to need spiritual food. Some need milk, and others have moved on to solid food. Regardless of a person’s level of maturity, we have a responsibility to give them what nourishes. We must lead people toward truth, both the Son of God and the record of His person and work. Practically, this means we teach them the Scriptures and introduce them to those who have gone before as faithful witnesses of its content.

Protect

Jesus warns that false teachers will arise as wolves disguised as sheep (Matt. 7:15). We have a responsibility to recognize such dangers and protect the flock. We must speak out against what is misleading. The Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep, so we too must be willing to sacrifice our own rights for the good of others. This mandate means that we must be willing to train ourselves to distinguish good from evil (Heb. 5:14), which necessitates the pursuit of godliness through prayer, study, community, etc.

Discipline

Shepherds must be willing to find sheep who have erred and bring them back into the fold (James 5:19-20; Luke 15:3-7). It has been said that shepherds will occasionally break the leg of a sheep which continuously strays in order to correct its wandering – for its own good. The Scriptures command discipline within the body of Christ (see Matt. 18:15-20 which immediately follows the



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parable of the lost sheep in Matthew 18:10-14). If we love our sheep, we will surely discipline them for their own good.



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LEADERSHIP ROLES AND FUNCTIONS

HUB LEADER

Qualifications

- Covenant Member
- Affirmed Characteristics
 - Love for Jesus - Actively growing in the maturity of faith while continually leading others in that direction.
 - Love for People - Strong desire and gifting to provide pastoral care for those in their charge.
 - Love for Scripture - Ability to communicate truth from Scripture accurately and articulately.
 - Leadership Gifting and Calling - Confirmed through the leadership process.

Role

- Cares for and counsels leaders and, when needed, group members
- Encourages leaders to maturity in faith through the understanding and application of Scripture
- Models Christ and the fullness of joy found in Him
- Mobilizes groups to serve the body and incarnate gospel via missional living and service projects.

Function

These are the specific means by which you will carry out the role of a hub leader in your designated Ministry area.

- Community Groups
 - Oversee 2-3 groups and their leaders
 - Attends each Community Group once per quarter
 - Meets with each leader once a month
 - Holds group leaders accountable to the fulfillment of their roles
 - Assesses replacement leaders when needed
 - Attends Annual Community Group Leader Retreat
 - Attends Community Group Leader Roundtables
 - Attends Community Group Connect
- Student Community Groups
 - Oversee 2-3 groups and their leaders
 - Attends each student community group once per quarter
 - Meet with each leader once a month
 - Holds group leaders accountable to the fulfillment of their roles
 - Attends Annual Community Group Leader Retreat
 - Attends Community Group Leader Roundtables
 - Attends Community Group Connect

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Qualifications

- Covenant Member
- Affirmed Characteristics
 - Love for Jesus - Actively growing in the maturity of faith while continually leading others in that direction.
 - Love for People - A strong desire and gifting to provide pastoral care for those in their charge.
 - Love for Scripture - An ability to communicate truth from Scripture accurately and articulately.



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- . Leadership Gifting and Calling - Confirmed through the leadership process

Role

- . Cares for and counsels group members
- . Encourages leaders to maturity in faith through the understanding and application of Scripture
- . Models Christ and the fullness of joy found in Him
- . Mobilizes group to serve the body and incarnate gospel via missional living and service projects

Function

These are the specific means by which you will carry out the role of a group leader in your designated ministry area

- . Community Groups
 - . Shepherds a Community Group of 12-15 individuals
 - . Identifies and develops future leaders (apprentices)
 - . Encourages non-members to pursue Covenant Membership and members to faithfulness
 - . Communicates regularly with hub leader
 - . Meets with hub leader once a month
 - . Follows Group meeting frequency
 - . Attends Group Leader Roundtables
 - . Attends Group Connect
 - . Attends annual Group Leader retreat
- . Student Community Groups
 - . Commits to one full year of service
 - . Communicates with hub leader twice per month
 - . Attends monthly hub leader meetings
 - . Attends Community Group Leader Round Tables
 - . Attends annual Group Leader retreat



COMMUNITY GROUP LEADER HANDBOOK

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT MATRIX

As Veritas continues to love God, love people, and advance the gospel in Fayetteville and the surrounding areas, our need for leaders will continue to grow. This matrix will help our current leaders as they assess potential new leaders. Each leader at Veritas should be working to replace themselves, to be raising up new leaders. Many of these qualities are character-based, and some are knowledge or skill-set based. While they are largely maturity related, they should not be seen as a “definition of value.” In other words, someone is not “better” because they are further along in this process. Additionally, we need more leaders at the Apprentice and Leader level than we do at the Deacon and Elder level and we don’t want to ever give the impression that this is some sort of ladder to climb. It merely serves as a tool to help us raise up leaders.

Veritas’ mission is to make disciples who love God, love people, and advance the gospel for the city, for the military, and for the fame of Jesus.

This matrix helps to give benchmarks of this mission in the lives of our emerging leaders.

For the apprenticeship development handbook, please see Appendix .

| | LOVE GOD | | | LOVE PEOPLE | ADVANCE THE GOSPEL |
|---------------------|----------|-------------------|-------------|--------------|--------------------|
| | GOSPEL | FAITHFULNESS | GIVING | SERVING | MISSION |
| APPRENTICE | Know | Teachable | Yes | Somewhere | Aware |
| LEADER | Share | Reliable | Regular | Consistently | Active |
| DEACON/ DIRECTOR | Share | Trusted | Generous | Leading | Owner |
| ELDER | Defend | Above Reproach | Sacrificial | Churchwide | Definer |

APPRENTICE

An apprentice is someone who is being assessed in an area of ministry. When someone has expressed interest in leading, or has been approached about leading, they should be placed in a ministry or Community Group as an apprentice. Every leader at Veritas should constantly be looking for and identifying apprentices, ideally, more than one. Leaders reproduce themselves (2 Timothy 2:2). Being an apprentice is the entry point to leadership at Veritas.

LOVE GOD > GOSPEL > KNOW

An apprentice should have a working knowledge of the gospel. They should, at a minimum, understand that as a Christian, they are a sinner, saved by grace through faith in Jesus’ finished work.



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LOVE GOD > FAITHFULNESS > TEACHABLE

An apprentice should be teachable. Humility and teachability are two of the first things we look for in potential leaders.

LOVE GOD > GIVING > YES

An apprentice should be committed to giving financially to support the work of the local church. This is not only a mark of a follower of Jesus, but an important step of commitment to Veritas as their local church.

LOVE PEOPLE > SERVING > SOMEWHERE

An apprentice should be serving somewhere in the church. Often, at this level, service is “trial and error,” with an apprentice serving in various areas until they find the spot where they can really thrive the way God has wired them.

ADVANCE THE GOSPEL > MISSION > AWARE

An apprentice should be aware of the mission of the church and the needs in our world.

Good questions to ask of someone who is interested in being an apprentice would be:

- What is the Gospel?
- Have you been baptized?
- Are you in a Community Group?
- Do you give to Veritas Church?
- Are you a member?

RESOURCES

- Humility by CJ Mahaney
- Christian Beliefs by Wayne Grudem
- Gospel by JD Greear

LEADER

A leader is someone who is leading other people. This could be in a community group, or on a service team, but they are setting an example and calling/rallying other people to follow them. They are leading others to carry out the mission of Veritas.

LOVE GOD > GOSPEL > SHARE

A leader is someone who knows how to share the Gospel with other people. This doesn't mean they are an expert, but they are able to “...give a reason for the hope that is in them.” (1 Peter 3:15) They understand how the gospel applies in day to day life. When someone under their leadership is struggling, a leader is able to point them back to the person and work of Jesus.

LOVE GOD > FAITHFULNESS > RELIABLE

A leader shows up, shows up on time, and can be counted on to do what they say they are going to do.



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LOVE GOD > GIVING > REGULAR

A leader has made financial giving to the church a habit. They give regularly, cheerfully, and faithfully to the local church.

LOVE PEOPLE > SERVING > CONSISTENT

A leader is a consistent servant. Their service to the church registers high on their list of priorities.

ADVANCE THE GOSPEL > MISSION > ACTIVE

A leader is actively on mission. Whether in the home, at work, or in the community, they are constantly looking for people they can introduce to Jesus through word and deed.

Good questions to ask of someone who is interested in being a leader would be:

- When was the last time you shared the gospel with someone?
- Who are you pouring your life into?
- Who is following you right now?
- Do you give regularly?

RESOURCES

- Desiring God by John Piper
- The Beginner's Guide to Spiritual Gifts by Sam Storms
- Money: God or Gift by Jamie Munson

DEACON/DIRECTOR

A deacon/director is a leader of leaders at Veritas. They are lead servants who, under the authority of the elders, carry out the mission of the church. They are player-coaches who help call the plays and then run onto the field to help execute the plays. Other leaders look to them for leadership.

LOVE GOD > GOSPEL > SHARE

A deacon is to "...hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience." (1 Timothy 3:9). While they do not have to be able to teach, a deacon does need to have a good grasp on the gospel and doctrine.

LOVE GOD > FAITHFULNESS > TRUSTED

A Deacon has gained the respect of others and others know that they can count on this person.

LOVE GOD > GIVING > GENEROUS

Deacons are defined by generosity. Giving, to them, isn't just a habit but is a strategic way they steward the resources God has given them.

LOVE PEOPLE > SERVING > LEADING

A Deacon serves by leading. This can be a difficult transition for those who like to "do things." This person leads through others instead of being the person to always make things happen on their own.

ADVANCE THE GOSPEL > MISSION > OWNER

A Deacon owns their ministry. They feel a personal sense of responsibility and weight to make sure things get done in a way that is consistent with Veritas' overall mission.



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Good questions to ask of someone who is interested in being an apprentice would be:

- What is the mission of Veritas Church? How have you led others toward that mission?
- Who is coaching/developing you?
- Are you sharing the gospel and the word of God with other people?
- Who are you pouring your life into/developing?
- Do you give generously?

RESOURCES

- Community by Brad House
- The Reason for God by Tim Keller

ELDER

LOVE GOD > GOSPEL > DEFEND

An Elder not only knows the Gospel, shares the gospel, and teaches the gospel, but they are equipped and prepared to defend the gospel when it is challenged. They are “flock-first” leaders in their oversight of the church instead of focusing only on the needs of individual “sheep.”

LOVE GOD > FAITHFULNESS > ABOVE REPROACH

An elder isn't perfect, but they have no glaring weaknesses in their life that would disqualify them from ministry or tarnish the reputation of the church.

LOVE GOD > GIVING > SACRIFICIAL

An Elder's lifestyle is impacted by their financial giving to Veritas. Simply, there are things they cannot do because of their giving. They are not in the ministry for the money and one evidence is their level of financial generosity.

LOVE PEOPLE > SERVING > CHURCHWIDE

An Elder's influence can be felt across multiple spheres of influence within the church. They serve the entire church through their specific role as an Elder.

ADVANCE THE GOSPEL > MISSION > DEFINER

An elder defines the mission of Veritas and helps the deacons and other leaders implement the mission in their specific ministry or sphere of influence. They are chief missiologists to the church, translating Veritas' overall mission into action.

RESOURCES

- Shepherd Leader by Timothy Witmer
- Sticky Teams by Larry Osborne
- Biblical Eldership by Alexander Strauch



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GROUP DYNAMICS

COMMUNITY GROUPS

Purpose

Community Groups foster gospel-centered community in which believers grow as disciples and make disciples for the fame of Jesus.

Structure and Size

The ideal size of a Community Group is 12 – 15 individuals, but size is ultimately determined by a pastor or hub leader based on abilities of the group leader.

Frequency

All Community Groups follow the same weekly schedule that lines up with the church calendar. On the first week of the month, groups attend the monthly night of prayer and worship or meet for prayer in their communities. On the second and third week, they go through required or approved curriculum. On the fourth week, leaders choose whether or not to meet for a non-study gathering. (i.e a social gathering/shared meal/etc.)

Groups do not meet during our corporate months of rest (April, August, December).

****We realize each group dynamic is unique and want to trust you to lead your group well. As such, if you feel like meeting weekly is not doable, talk with your hub leader about setting up a different rhythm for your group).**

Entry Points

Individuals join Community Groups by invitation from a Community Group member, with consent from the Community Group leader, or by attending Community Group Connect.

Mobilization and Service

Community Groups follow 12-month Multiplication Strategy (see Appendix C).

STUDENT COMMUNITY GROUPS

Purpose

Student Community Groups foster gospel-centered community in which believers grow as disciples and make disciples.

Structure and Size

The ideal size of a Student Community Group is 12 – 15 individuals, but size is ultimately determined by a pastor based on the abilities of the group leader.

Frequency

All Student Community Groups follow the same weekly schedule that lines up with the Student Community Groups calendar. On the first week of the month, groups attend the night of prayer and worship or meet for prayer in their communities. On the second and fourth week, they



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go through the Doctrine curriculum. On the third week, groups participate in a connectivity gathering chosen by leader and occasionally by staff.

Entry Points

Individuals join Student Community Groups by invitation from a group member, or with consent from the group leader..

Mobilization and Service

Leaders empower group members to live missionally. Group members serve and participate in service and missions projects.



APPENDICES



COMMUNITY GROUP LEADER HANDBOOK

APPENDIX A MEANS OF RECONCILIATION: COMMUNITY

Everyone wants to belong. None of us needs to be convinced that there is something inside of us that wants to be accepted and loved by others. We are made to want those relationships – and are able to provide them in turn for others. God gave us that desire and ability, which is just one of the desires that sin distorts. The desire to belong can be so strong that we will join up with whoever will take us or search until we find others who are just like us. Neither solution makes us happy. We are people who want to belong – but to what and whom?

Think of your closest relationship. What do you value about this friendship?

What makes you feel connected with your family?

Where have you felt most strongly that you belonged?

What do you feel in these memories? Joy? Acceptance? Peace? Security?

Our culture clearly feels the need to belong. Think about the last time you went to your favorite coffee shop and ordered your drink. How often do you go to sit, work or read while you sip? Starbucks has put a lot of thought into how they approach that white cup in your hand – and they are tapping into something much deeper. Here is part of their mission statement from the corporate website:

- **Our Customers** - When we are fully engaged, we connect with, laugh with, and uplift the lives of our customers – even if just for a few moments. Sure, it starts with the promise of a perfectly made beverage, but our work goes far beyond that. It's really about human connection.
- **Our Stores** - When our customers feel this sense of belonging, our stores become a haven, a break from the worries outside, a place where you can meet with friends. It's about enjoyment at the speed of life – sometimes slow and savored, sometimes faster. Always full of humanity.
- **Our Neighborhood** - Every store is part of a community, and we take our responsibility to be good neighbors seriously. We want to be invited in wherever we do business. We can be a force for positive action – bringing together our partners, customers, and the community to contribute every day. Now we see that our responsibility – and our potential for good – is even larger. The world is looking to Starbucks to set the new standard, yet again. We will lead.

Have you seen these things at work in your local Starbucks? Are any of these goals the reasons why you enjoy spending time there? What does this say about the power of our desire to belong and be known?



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How are your friendships? Do you feel connected to those around you or do your relationships seem lacking?

How do you define community?

For the believer, the source of our desire for true community is found in the triune Godhead. Existing in perfect harmony and unity within the Trinity, each Person holds a distinct role and function. The first Person of the Trinity, God the Father, functions as the Creator, externally existing and sovereign over election, creation, providence and redemption. Jesus Christ, the second Person of the Trinity, is externally begotten Redeemer, Savior and Judge of the world. He is the image of the invisible God, the incarnation of the Word of God, both fully man and fully God, submitting to and glorifying the Father. The Holy Spirit is eternally proceeding from the Father and Son and is the Comforter who searches, speaks, testifies, inspires, commands, reveals, equips and intercedes as the third Person of the Trinity.

Within the three Members of the Trinity, there is a constant flow of love – but all within the One. “Within God’s very nature is a divine ‘rhythm’ or pattern of continuous giving and receiving– not only love, but also glory, honor, life...each in its fullness,” says Tim Keller, pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City. If God were not Trinity, but rather a Unity (one God in one Person), there would be no divine community. Love would not flow within God but would rather be motionless – it would be isolation.

But praise Him! Love does flow within God, and it is this love that overflowed to us, causing the Father to send the Son to die for our sin.

This love of God in Christ frees us from the effects of sin: autonomy, self-sufficiency and idolatry. We are able to have deep relationships because of the cross of Christ. We reflect God’s love when we love one another, bear one another’s burdens and walk in biblical community. It is this love that distinguishes our community as Christians from the coffee shop and the sports bar. It is this love that marks our identity as a people who belong to God.

Shortly before being arrested and tried, Jesus prayed for the unity of His people – for you, me and all the saints throughout history. He prayed that our unity would be like that of the unity found within the Godhead (John 17:21-22). We can see in the testimony of the early church that community was the natural result of the Spirit’s influence upon the Church (Acts 2:42-47). The believers lived among each other, served and supported as needed, and encouraged one another to hope in the Lord. They lived as God’s people and treated each other as such.

Author Paul Tripp emphasizes our current need for community by reminding us that, “we are incessant interpreters of our own realities, coupled with the fact that we lack plausible deniability with ourselves. We need each other to consistently communicate the truth of where we stand with sin and God to us in a way that penetrates our delusions. The enemy wins by getting us to be autonomous, self sufficient Christians.”



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We were created by an eternally existing Community to eternally exist in community. In being obedient to this calling, The Veritas desires for each member to be deeply involved in the lives of others and to live life together.

What keeps you from seeing yourself as part of God's chosen people?

What would change if you viewed fellow believers as people precious to God and as your own family?

Would you consider yourself an autonomous Christian? Do you live as though you are self-sufficient?

How do you try to protect your time and self from others?

In our daily routine, most of us work within subtle spheres. Walk into a movie theatre and look at how many people skipped a seat. Step into Starbucks and try asking to share a table with someone – think about what look you might get (or give). We like our space and we like our privacy, so the closer we are to someone emotionally, the more we might share – and with distance we share less.

In his work Proxemics, anthropologist Edward Hall describes four social spheres that people use as spatial references to develop their own communication and culture: public, social, personal and intimate. We use all the spatial references together to gain what we need for a sense of community. Significant experience in each space is essential to a healthy human being. The spaces are defined through context and physical distance; therefore, it might be helpful to think of them as two similar frameworks but not identical in nature as one relates to verbal self-revelation and the other physical social interaction.

- **Public:** When people connect because of an outside influence (sports, music, etc.). (12 feet +)
- **Social:** Where we share snapshots or create first impressions of ourselves. This is the space for neighbor relationships, which are not necessarily geographical neighbors, but those individuals of whom we would not mind asking for a small favor. According to each context, this is where we practice telling who we are. (4 to 12 feet)
- **Personal:** The space where we share private thoughts, feelings and experiences. The people in this sphere are “close friends.” They know more about us than perhaps our neighbor friends but not enough for us to feel uncomfortable. (18 inches to 4 feet)
- **Intimate:** When share our most closely held thoughts, feelings and experiences. The people in this space know all there is to know about us. (0 to 18 inches)

The four spaces describe an organic harmony, a rhythm for helping people search for and build their community. We experience belonging in all four of these spaces, and our relationships contribute to health and connectedness.



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Socially healthy individuals have relationships within each of these spheres of connection. There is progressive revelation of personal details at each level – much like the peeling of an onion. Most of us love talking about ourselves, and if you ask us what we like, an easy conversation begins. But ask us that in front of 50 people, and few of us would pipe up so quickly. We form relationships in spheres of learned competencies for social interaction at the varying levels.

It is important to note that these spaces work in harmony, not in progression. The end goal of every relationship is not the intimate space. People need significant relationships and interaction in each sphere to feel connected to the world around them. However, not everyone functions the same in each space. Some people are wired for desiring primarily intimate relationships, while others struggle to have any relationships outside the social space. Neither is a healthy harmony for community.

For many there is a pressing expectation to be known at an intimate level, and the seeming void in the other spaces puts a heavy weight upon those few who fill the intimate space in our lives. We see this in our disconnected and distracted culture where we are willing to share so much about ourselves with whoever will listen, if someone will just ask us the right questions. We are dying to be known and heard but unwilling to listen to others.

We all carry expectations on our friends, and when we lack friends – real gospel- centered friendships – we place the expectation on the intimate space of our lives on the larger crowd we run with. We get the relationship frameworks confused. Instead of the few, we expect the many to meet our intimate needs and become bitter when they don't, but in truth, we need relationships with the many and the few.

Step into a weekend gathering at Veritas Church, and you will notice quickly that you are in the public sphere. There are hundreds of individuals in a gathering, and there is little room for small talk or conversation. For those who attend the weekend gathering but are not involved otherwise (through groups, for example), there are two spheres engaged – public and intimate. Individuals are sitting 0 to 18 inches apart from each other, and there is little horizontal personal interaction. There is, however, loads of expectation for the soul which longs to be connected and can't seem to break the spatial barrier due to lack of relationship or willingness to meet others. People come every weekend and sit in a room full of other people, feeling completely alone.

The social and personal spheres are vital to health and maturity. Our desire is that Community Groups help harmonize connection for the individual where the larger weekend service is a corporate time of worship among the public, social, personal and intimate spaces, fostered through life together during the weeks between.

As a Community Group leader, the goal is not to force every member or attendee to interact at an intimate level. People change their frame of mind all the time, often due to their day or mood, and in this, each of us relate from different spaces with each other at different times. Learning to recognize and respect where people are and then help them find harmony within their relationships in each space may be the key to helping them feel connected and engaged in the body of Christ. This may seem contradictory to the common thought that everyone should engage at an intimate level in every Community Group session, but part of the freedom we live in is that God is in control of people's sanctification, not Community Group leaders. We love them and help them by the grace God gives us.



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IDENTIFYING MARKS OF GOSPEL-CENTERED COMMUNITY

- **Genuine and authentic** – We consistently work to tear down dividing walls that we erect out of pride, embarrassment, fear, isolation, individualism and sin.
- **Safe** – We confess our struggles, sins, doubts and shortcomings and share in our sufferings and joys.
- **Intentional** – We fight together, applying God’s Word, helping the poor, reaching the lost and loving on each other.



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APPENDIX B RHYTHM WITHIN COMMUNITY GROUPS

Community Groups are expected to meet once a week, 3 to 4 times a month. We suggest a rhythm of night of prayer and worship, 2 or 3 weeks of study and a social gathering. If this is the minimum expectation, there are at least four set opportunities for your community to gather each month. A typical evening in a Community Group consists of study, prayer and fellowship. As the church goes through studies that align with the sermon, the desire is for groups to flesh out what they hear on the weekend, learning to engage with each other in the truth of Scripture and pray together.

The problem comes when this expectation remains the norm. Community has never terminated on a weeknight event. The essence of relationship is not just about being present together. It is about living out daily experiences, sorrows and joys together. When the hope of belonging moves from an event to a people, we begin to live out true community.

The issue of time is a ready excuse or barrier for anyone when it comes to belonging. But when we value the people in our community, the things that take up our time today won't tomorrow. We become willing to limit our freedom to pursue depth over width. In a culture of option and commitment aversion, we must intentionally harmonize the rhythms of our lives with those in our communities, and as we do, dinners, coffees, trips and hangouts start to involve those in your Community Group.

In his book *Community*, Brad House suggests building a "culture of opportunity" within your group. He suggests that where the base expectation is a weekly meeting for study, the opportunity is the creation of a new culture that seeks out and invites others into daily life. Thus, the opportunities for relationships to build multiply beyond the minimal weekly gathering. These are not all organized by the leader, but members are encouraged to offer up options, as well. It wouldn't work to make every event mandatory, but when the culture is full of opportunity, there is always freedom to attend when able.

Examples within Veritas Church Community Group rhythm would be:

- Following the suggested Community Group meeting schedule (3-4 meetings a month)
- Sitting with your Community Group at the weekend gathering
- Getting lunch or dinner around that gathering that you all attend
- Having breakfast 1-2 times a month, possibly as a neighborhood outreach
- Gender-specific accountability times like coffee, dinner or breakfast (1-2 times a month)
- A standing reservation dinner for whoever can make it (1-2 times a month)



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APPENDIX C GOSPEL-CENTERED MULTIPLICATION IN GROUPS

Gospel-centered community takes place when we not only preach the gospel to one another, but also when we preach the gospel to the lost and dying world around us. This guide outlines how your group can take the gospel beyond the walls of your communities and into the world around you. Every month there will be instructions to help you build relationships with your neighbors and those in your community in hopes of sharing the good news of Jesus Christ.

By the end of these seven months, your group will corporately be striving to:

- Consistently pray for each of your neighbors.
- Be connected to and know each of your neighbors and their families.
- Be in consistent contact with each of your neighbors through intentional conversations and encounters (ex. spending time in the front yard to create opportunities or hosting a barbecue for Halloween).
- Share your story of life change and the hope of the gospel.

MONTH 1: PRAY

Task

Introduce yourself to all your neighbors. Write down their names on a note card and begin praying for each of them daily. When your group meets next month, pray for each of your neighbors and for opportunities to engage them on a deeper level.

Getting Started

The best way to meet your neighbors is by spending time in the community. Take walks and have your family spend time in the front yard every day. Put yourself in positions where you can run into those who live around you. Take prayer walks with your family and begin to ask God to build relationships and opportunities for the gospel to be shared.

At group

Share the names written on your note cards. Break into pairs and pray over the names.

MONTH 2: STORIES

Task

Get to know your neighbors on a deeper level. Find out about their hobbies, families, occupations, etc. Write this information down on your prayer cards and begin praying more specifically for your neighbors.

Getting Started

This task requires conversations. Look for opportunities to strike up conversations while doing yard work, spending time at the park or dropping your kids off at school. The more you share about yourself, the more your neighbors will do the same.

Group Time

Share appropriate details from conversations you had with your neighbors. If someone in your group



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had a great encounter, ask that person to encourage the group by sharing the story. Break into new pairs and continue to pray over the cards.

MONTH 3: GROUP SERVE

Task

As a group, do a service project in one of your neighborhoods or in your local community. This is a great opportunity to support a local school, non-profit organization or a neighbor in need.

Getting Started

Share ideas of how your group can serve your community and pick one opportunity. Delegate responsibilities so every person in the group has ownership. If you are unable to serve in one of your neighborhoods, look for options from your campus. Feel free to contact your Community Groups pastor for ideas.

At Group

Share your experiences from the service project. Start praying for your city along with each of your neighbors.

MONTH 4: MONTH OF CORPORATE REST AT VERITAS

MONTH 5: BRIDGING THE GAP

Task

Invite at least one neighbor over for a meal. This will give you opportunities to engage that person on a deeper level. This could take on numerous forms. Feel free to invite multiple neighbors. The goal is to begin taking your relationship deeper by sharing more of your life and family with the people around you.

Getting Started

Bring your schedules for the next month to the group. Look for times to have neighbors over and hold one another accountable to do this. Think through questions you want to ask to make the time intentional. The questions should help paint a picture of where your neighbor is spiritually, relationally, occupationally, etc.

At Group

Share your experiences with the group. Discuss how these kinds of opportunities can become a normal part of your life. How do you weave engaging your neighbors into everyday life?

MONTH 6: NEIGHBOR SERVE

Task

Serve one or more of your neighbors. This could be done through yard work, taking kids to school, cooking a meal, etc. Share ideas with your group. The goal is to find opportunities to love on your neighbors through putting their needs above your own.

Getting Started

Not everyone in your group will know how they can serve their neighbors, so hold one another



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accountable to follow through with this task. The goal is to know your neighbors well enough to know their needs and to seek out ways to love them through meeting those needs.

At Group

Share stories from serving your neighbors. Spend time praying for each of your neighbors and for more opportunities to show them the love of Christ.

MONTH 7: YOUR STORY

Task

Share your testimony with one of your neighbors. You will need to have a preexisting relationship to build on. Spend time talking through your story with the group, asking for helpful ways to make your testimony clearer. As a group, pray for open doors to share your stories.

Getting Started - As a group, make sure you are all confident with sharing your stories. Talk through fears and hesitations that need to be overcome and pray through those as a group. Practice walking through your testimonies with one another and carefully listen for the gospel in your stories.

At Group

As a group, spend your meeting time summarizing your experiences from the last six months. Talk about ways that you can continue your efforts. What were the wins from these exercises? What are going to be your biggest obstacles in moving forward? How can your group hold you accountable to being a messenger of reconciliation in your neighborhood?



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APPENDIX D COMMUNION WITH YOUR COMMUNITY GROUP

Communion should be part of your Community Group's set rhythm. You have the opportunity to, as a body, remember the Lord's work, proclaim it to one another and take the ordinances together. The early church broke bread together (Acts 2), and we fall in line with 2,000 years of believers when we do the same.

Before group, gather the juice and bread with cups for each person and a whole loaf to tear from or pre-sliced pieces to pass. Spend some time reading over the passages in the Gospels where the Lord institutes the practice and think about the work of God in saving you. Leading your group in this practice is a special opportunity to serve them by proclaiming to them and yourself the wonder of Jesus anew.

Consider reading the following texts and choose one to read to the group: Matthew 26:26-29, Luke 22:14-20 and 1 Corinthians 11:23-26. Encourage your group to think upon the work of Christ and His death, burial and resurrection. Think upon the finality and fullness of His sacrifice for us (Heb. 9:23-26), the inheritance He bought for us (Gal. 4:1-7) and His return, when we will be in His presence at last (Rev. 21:1-4; 22:1-5).

Give your group a few moments before taking the elements to confess any sin they have not brought to the Lord, any areas where they have loved something more than Him or tried to take control of their lives from Him. Encourage them that this is a freeing time for those who have God's approval in Christ to confess, ask for grace and help, and celebrate together.

Pass out the elements and explain that it is only for believers in Christ. If there are unbelievers in your group, communion is not for them. There is nothing special about the bread and juice, but what they represent is of utter importance and not to be treated lightly.

When you are ready to take the elements, you can repeat the words from Matthew 26:26-28:

Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."

Lead the group in a prayer of thanksgiving and praise to close.



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APPENDIX E COMMUNITY GROUP APPRENTICE DEVELOPMENT

We desire to be continually developing leaders within Community Groups. As a community group leader, you should consider how you can be developing an apprentice(s) within your group. The goal of this document is to equip you as you identify, assess, and develop someone who will one day be leading a group themselves.

- 1. Identify a Potential Apprentice and Bring Your Hub Leader In On It** - Ask God for the wisdom and discernment to do this. Characteristics and qualifications to look for (In addition to those listed in our leadership development matrix on page 21):
 - Loves Jesus (John 14:15), loves the Church (John 15:12), and loves the lost (John 17:8)
 - Listens to others, includes others in conversation (James 1:19; Romans 15:1)
 - Holds Scripture as their ultimate authority (2 Tim. 3:16)
 - Eager to serve the needs of others through different means of hospitality (Rom. 12:1-13)
 - Humble (James 4:6).
 - Is a covenant member and regularly attends church gatherings
- 2. Invite the potential apprentice to consider it** - Ask your potential apprentice to consider coming alongside you to train for potential future group leadership. Most people will have some reservations and may even fear that they are unqualified for the responsibilities of leadership. Discuss any of their concerns with them and make sure they also understand that you will help them develop their skills and confidence as a community group leader. (Along with your hub leader, put together a training timeline with a flexible end goal of when this potential leader will be ready to plant.)
- 3. Once there is agreement by the individual to become an apprentice, and both you and your hub leader believe the person is ready, share with the group that this individual is being recognized as an apprentice and is being trained for future Community Group leadership.** Encourage your apprentice to take advantage of church sponsored training events. Incrementally increase the level of responsibility for the apprentice (leading times of prayer, leading discussion, planning events, etc.). At the appropriate time, and after your Hub Leader's approval, encourage the apprentice to take responsibility for their group by starting a new one or multiplying one with members of the existing group and hub.

There are three books that we want all Veritas community group leaders to have read and discussed with someone. As soon as you identify an apprentice, continue discipling them by going through these books with them.

- 1. Community by Brad House** – This book gets into all the nitty gritty details of the type of community we want to develop along with very practical details of how to lead and facilitate your group as a leader.
- 2. Christian Beliefs by Wayne Grudem** – This book dives into twenty basics that every Christian should know.
- 3. The Beginner's Guide to Spiritual Gifts by Sam Storms** – This book dives into the spiritual gifts and how they should operate within the church.



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APPENDIX F MONTHLY UPDATE FORM

This is the form that we need you to fill out each month before you meet with your hub leader. You can fill it out electronically on our website (Resources → Leader Resources → CGL Monthly Update Form).

- Group leader's name
- Your name (if you're not the group leader)
- Your email address
- Who is your hub leader?
- Has your group meeting time, location, or day changed?
- What was your average weekly attendance this month?
- Are there any folks in your group who haven't attended that you might need to follow up with?
- Are you currently training an apprentice? Name?
- Is there anything in the group you feel like the pastors need to know about (sin issues, someone who needs care, etc.) ?
- Please provide any additional comments or questions here (big stories, group plans, group changes, needs, or anything else).



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APPENDIX G

CHURCH DISCIPLINE GUIDELINES: THEOLOGY, PHILOSOPHY, AND PRACTICE

Thank you to Sojourn Community Church in Louisville, KY, for their diligence in pursuing this topic so thoroughly and for allowing us to use and borrow its material for this document.

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INTRODUCTION: DISCIPLINE IN LIGHT OF THE GOSPEL

In the beginning, man and woman were created by God for His glory and for our greatest joy. By design, our greatest delight and truest satisfaction were to be found in trusting and treasuring God.

Though man was originally created good, the Scriptures reveal that he eventually and willingly rebelled against his Creator. Therefore, he has ever since suffered the consequences, condemnation and curses of what has been called “the fall.” This fall did not merely change mankind’s environment, but also his very essence. By this one original sin, the nature of humanity was altered, and we became sinners, natural enemies of God, predisposed to hate and rebel against Him. We were enslaved to the tyranny of sin and the death which it brings, and we were exposed to the just wrath of God.

Though man suppressed and exchanged true worship of the Creator for praise of created things, God’s plans to unite His glory and our joy were not thwarted at the fall. Rather, He has been patiently and purposefully working to restore what was broken. This restoration has been most clearly and fully revealed through the person and work of the Son of God, Jesus Christ. In the perfect obedience of His life, His death for our sins, and His resurrection, Christ introduced reconciliation into the world. Through treasuring and trusting in His finished work, we once again have relationship with our Creator.

Though we who believe have experienced true redemption and reconciliation, the fullness of our hope awaits us in the future. We are longing for the promise of Christ’s return, our resurrection and the restoration of creation. Until then, we still struggle with the residue of our old self, the flesh. This struggle is not to be lived out alone, but rather in the context of community, particularly the local church. We are called by God to watch out for ourselves and those whom we love lest we be enticed by the deceitful promises of sin. We will never truly love discipline until we hate sin.

UNDERSTANDING DISCIPLINE

Love demands discipline. On a personal level, love for the Lord demands a response in which the desires of the flesh are slowly and methodically put to death. On the corporate level, love for the Lord and for His church requires a response in which sin is dealt with as God has intended. What loving parent would allow their child to play with fire? Would we expect anything different from our heavenly Father?

Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil, struggling with all His energy that He powerfully works within me. (Colossians 1:28-29)



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From this passage in Colossians we see that discipleship and the discipline through which it occurs is defined as maturity in Christ. This is accomplished primarily through teaching and warning. We might divide these two aspects of discipleship into two necessary components: those which are formative and those which are restorative. Formative discipline involves teaching, preaching, prayer, study, fasting and various other forms of engagement or abstinence to correct tendencies toward committing sins or omitting responsibilities in the Christian life. Restorative discipline occurs in the context of community and involves warnings, rebukes, exhortation and correction intending to prevent or to correct explicitly sinful or foolish expressions within the church. Both are a means of training us toward our goal of maturity in Christ. Neither personal formative discipline nor corporate restorative discipline are easy or necessarily enjoyable at the time. However, both are necessary for us to cultivate holiness. We must be trained by discipline in order to grow into maturity.

The Scriptures are full of wisdom regarding discipline. The writer of Hebrews teaches us that God's children are disciplined by Him in one form or another. Sometimes He sends tribulation and persecution or removes worldly comforts to foster humility, holiness and faith in us. Sometimes He disciplines through the work of the community of faith. It is this context of corporate discipline in the local church body with which this document is concerned. Therefore, the term "church discipline" will include the various steps of the community of faith coming alongside a professing believer to encourage, warn and rebuke him in loving hope for his or her restoration and movement toward Christian maturity.

Our hope, however, is that formative discipline through the work of the Holy Spirit will keep us from the need for the restorative forms. Regardless of the form, we will certainly be disciplined and God will use it to accomplish His loving purposes.

And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? "MY SON, DO NOT REGARD LIGHTLY THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD, NOR BE WEARY WHEN REPROVED BY HIM. FOR THE LORD DISCIPLINES THE ONE HE LOVES, AND CHASTISES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES." It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. ¹¹ For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. (Hebrews 12:5-11)

An Individual Calling

A significant part of the Christian life calls for the believer to be intentional, disciplined and self-controlled in seeking and submitting to the Lord through personal devotion and practice (cf. Gal. 5:22-23; 2 Tim. 1:7). However, our flesh is opposed to our desire for holiness (Gal. 5:16-17), and we must therefore be diligent to fight the flesh and walk by the Spirit (Rom. 8:12-14) as children of God. By His grace, we can grow in our ability to live by faith through the Spirit's sanctifying work (1 Pet.1:2) as we relate to God and others through the realities of life.

A Corporate Calling

Given the deceitfulness of sin, all of us need the most basic level of church discipline that involves our brothers and sisters speaking truth in love to us (Eph. 4:15, 29) because we are often blind to our own sinfulness (cf. Matt.7:3-5). We need one another to believe and live out the gospel—this is God's design.



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Every church member is called to exercise their individual gifts to build up the body in love (1 Cor. 12). Every member is called to labor and struggle with all energy to help one another in the church to grow in conformity to Christ (cf. Col.1:28-29).

Spiritual Warfare

Our call to live out the gospel takes place within the realm of spiritual warfare. The kingdom of evil is ever-present and always working against the kingdom of God. The difficulties we face in life are ultimately “not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places” (Eph. 6:12). Our “adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour” (1 Pet. 5:8) and seeks to keep us living in fear and not by faith. Therefore, we need to love one another through encouragement, rebuke and correction since we are all prone to wander from our God.

THE CONTEXT OF DISCIPLINE

The situations addressed in this statement are those of explicit sin or foolishness. Far too often individuals and churches engage in the disciplinary process in situations where the issue is not explicitly sinful or foolish behavior. This must not be the case. However, we must not let the fact that some would misappropriate Scripture to distract us from our responsibility to apply it as the Lord has directed.

This distinction between dealing with issues of preference and those of sin is made explicit in the following passages:

But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. 13Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this--not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way. (Romans 14:10)

I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people; I did not at all mean with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters, for then you would have to go out of the world. But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler--not even to eat with such a one. For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within the church? But those who are outside, God judges. REMOVE THE WICKED MAN FROM AMONG YOURSELVES.

(1 Corinthians 5:9-13)

While we will discuss the 1 Corinthians passage in more detail in a later section, it will suffice for now to notice the seeming contradiction in Paul's admonitions. In Romans 14, Paul writes that we should not judge our brothers. In 1 Corinthians 5, he writes that we should judge our brothers. Given that Scripture is not self-contradictory, we know that Paul's inspired interpretation of events must reflect differing circumstances.

The contexts of both passages clearly indicate that the situations are quite distinct. Romans 14 is dealing with principles of preference while 1 Corinthians 5 is dealing with that which has been clearly revealed as sin. This distinction must be maintained in the way in which individuals and churches interpret and apply Scripture today. Once again, the issues with which this document will be



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concerned are those of sin, not preference or conscience.¹ We are called to judge objective actions, not subjective attitudes and motivations. The latter is for the Lord to weigh and measure.

1. An example to help flesh this out involves alcohol. Nowhere in the Scriptures is alcohol consumption deemed inherently sinful. Like the discussion of Romans 14, it is a matter of personal preference and conviction. As such, church discipline cannot and will not be enacted in the case of a believer who chooses to have an alcoholic beverage. However, if this believer drinks to the point of drunkenness, then the matter is no longer one of conscience, but is a clear violation of Scripture (Eph. 5:18; 1 Cor. 5:11; et al) and will therefore be dealt with accordingly.

THE PURPOSE OF DISCIPLINE

Why should the church engage in corporate discipline? Five reasons stand out as most pertinent:

1. We love the Lord
2. We love our members
3. We love his church
4. We love non-believers
5. We love the Scriptures

1. We Love the Lord

Our God is a holy God whose eyes can look on no evil (Hab.1:13). Though none of us will fully comprehend the Lord this side of glory, we recognize that our love for Him is informed by our understanding of who He is. We cannot love Him Whom we do not know. Part of the call to love God is to abhor that which is opposed to Him. Failure to fully appreciate the utter horror of sin is evidence of an incomplete understanding of the holiness of God.

Sin is a horrid thing. Through just one sin death, depravity, corruption and disease have reigned upon the earth for thousands of years. It always has devastating effects and all of us constantly live in that awareness.

As believers, we have great hope in no longer being enslaved to sin or its curse. We have been granted liberty through the free gift of God's grace. However, this liberty does not grant us license to sin. Rather, those who have tasted of the grace of God should be all the more adamant to oppose the sinful flesh. While we recognize that we will not see perfection until Christ returns, such acknowledgment should not lull us into an apathetic view of sin. It is still horrid and grotesque and has no place in the life of the believer.

The church must recover a healthy view of the holiness of God and our responsibility to flee from our natural passions and desires. We would do well to remember the many admonitions of Hebrews:

For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it.
(Hebrews 2:1)

Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God.
(Hebrews 3:12)



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Therefore, let us fear if, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to have come short of it...Therefore let us be diligent to enter that rest, so that no one will fall, through following the same example of disobedience.

(Hebrews 4:1, 11)

For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a terrifying expectation of judgment and THE FURY OF A FIRE WHICH WILL CONSUME THE ADVERSARIES. Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY" And again, "THE LORD WILL JUDGE HIS PEOPLE." It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

(Hebrews 10:26-31)

Being Reformed in our understanding of Scripture, we do not believe that any true believer can ultimately fall away from God's grace. However, we must also confess that there exists the very real possibility that some will find false assurance of salvation. This is surely terrifying.

These texts are not intended to relegate believers to perpetual fear, but rather to rouse the sluggish and undisciplined from their slumber. If a so-called believer is engaged in willful, persistent and unrepentant sin, the Scriptures say that his honest expectation should be judgment and punishment. That does not mean that he will receive such, for all true believers will ultimately persevere, but it does mean that he or she has no evidence upon which to base his or her claims of safety. Unrepentant sin in the believer must be dealt with by repentance. Failure to repent might be evidence of an unregenerate heart which is unable to turn from sin (Heb. 12:15-17).

Love for God demands the discipline of holiness.

2. We Love Our Members

The motivation behind church discipline should always be the hope of the restoration of the wayward brother or sister. Discipline is not the end, but rather is the means to the expected end of repentance and reconciliation in the life of the true believer.

My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back, remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins.

(James 5:19-20)

In loving our members, we must remember to allow the Scriptures to define the means and manners of our love. While our culture might tell us that acceptance is love, the Scriptures are clear that true love calls to holiness and life through the gospel of Jesus Christ.

By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and observe His commandments.

(1 John 5:2)



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Attempting to love in a way that neglects Scripture not only evidences a lack of faith in Scripture and the Author of such Scripture, but also an ignorance as to the meaning of genuine love for the brother or sister. We must love in a way that is consistent with the biblical revelation. The Lord created the method of church discipline as His intended means of sanctifying the church and her individual members. This is how He intends to sanctify His people and therefore failure on our part to carry out His desires is decidedly unloving.

Love for our members demands that we engage in discipline for their good and not let them sit idly in their sin and pretend as if nothing is wrong.

3. We Love His Church

Not only are we called to love our individual members, but also to love the whole assembly who gather together in the name of the Lord. To allow for unrepentant and persistent sin to leaven the congregation should certainly be a concern which drives and informs our decisions in church discipline.

It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father's wife. And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you. For though absent in body, I am present in spirit; and as if present, I have already pronounced judgment on the one who did such a thing. When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus, you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord. Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people—not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler—not even to eat with such a one. For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? God judges those outside. "Purge the evil person from among you."

(1 Corinthians 5:1-13)

Love for the church demands that we discipline ourselves for the sake of purity.

We Love Non-Believers

Those who profess belief in Christ and yet continue in unrepentant sin misrepresent the nature of grace and the very faith that they claim. We want non-believers to know that the Christian faith does not merely gloss over hypocrisy and pretending. We take seriously the calls of our Lord.

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in



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newness of life.
(Romans 6:1-4)

We Love the Scriptures

As we will discuss in the following sections, the Lord has specifically revealed the method through which the church is expected to deal with sin in its body. Failing to obey God's commands is sin. We must be careful lest we ourselves fall into sin merely by allowing others to engage in it.

"How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word. With my whole heart I seek you; let me not wander from your commandments! I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you. Blessed are you, O Lord; teach me your statutes! With my lips I declare all the rules of your mouth. In the way of your testimonies I delight as much as in all riches. I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways. I will delight in your statutes; I will not forget your word."
(Psalm 119:9-16)

Love for the Scriptures demands that we discipline in accordance with its instructions.

VERITAS CHURCH MEMBERSHIP COVENANT PROVISIONS

Part of the membership process at Veritas Church includes the signing of our membership covenant. This covenant outlines the respective responsibilities of elders and members toward the church body. Particularly relevant are the following responsibilities:

ELDERS' COVENANT

- We covenant that your elders and deacons will meet the character qualifications required of them in the Scriptures (1 Tim. 3:1-13; 5:17-22; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-4)
- We covenant to seek God's will for our church community to the best of our ability as we study the Scriptures and follow the Spirit (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1-5).
- We covenant to care for you and seek your growth as a disciple of Christ, in part by equipping you for service (Eph. 4:11-13) and praying for you regularly, particularly when you are sick (James 5:14).
- We covenant to provide teaching and counsel from the whole of Scripture (Acts 20:27-28; Gal. 6:6; 1 Tim. 5:17-18).
- We covenant to be on guard against false teachers (Acts 20:28-31).
- We covenant to exercise church discipline when necessary (Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 5; Gal. 6:1).
- We covenant to set an example and join you in fulfilling the duties of church members (1 Cor. 11:1; Phil. 3:17; 1 Tim. 4:12).



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MEMBERS' COVENANT

I have read and understood the Veritas doctrinal statement and will not be divisive to its teaching. I also understand the importance of submission to church leadership and will be diligent to preserve unity and peace (Eph. 4:1-3; Heb. 13:7, 17).

- **I will live a life of holiness** - Acknowledging that every person is imperfect and that we will all blow it at one time or another, this commitment entails that we be honest about where we are and that when we sin, we come clean and trust the body of Christ to restore us to fellowship through the grace of God. As we often say, "It's ok to not be ok...it's just not ok to stay there."
 - For I am the Lord your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy. (Leviticus 11:44)
- **I will live a life of serving** - This is a commitment to transition from a spectator mentality to a participatory one. Involvement is understood, on a minimum level, to be a faithful worshiper in communal celebration and to find a particular place of service in which to use gifts and talents.
 - Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness. (Romans 12:6-8)
- **I will live a life of giving** - We ask every person of any means who feels called to be a part of Veritas to be a generous and sacrificial giver, and we challenge members to give from the abundance God has provided. Giving of our finances is one way for us to respond generously to the greatness of Jesus.
 - A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the Lord; it is holy to the Lord. (Leviticus 27:30)
 - For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. (2 Corinthians 8:3)
- **I will live a life in community** - Following Jesus is much more than attending Sunday services and volunteering where God has called you. We are the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27) and are called to share our gifts, take on one another's burdens, and serve each other in love as we live life together. There are numerous Community Groups at Veritas, each one reflecting the lives in it and their calling to worship God.
 - Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common. And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need. (Acts 4:32-35)
- **I will live a life of mission** - People commit to using their many gifts and unique personalities in building meaningful relationships with those who do not know Christ and, through a genuine expression of love, help others come to faith.
 - Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. (Matthew 28:19-20)



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Given that these responsibilities in the Scriptures are applicable to all believers, Veritas Church will reserve the right to exercise loving discipline outside of its official membership for those who regularly attend. The further a person is outside of the fold, the less biblical responsibility we will feel toward engaging them.

THE STEPS & DYNAMIC OF CHURCH DISCIPLINE

| Matthew 18:15-17 | Step 1 | Step 2 | Step 3 | Step 4 |
|--|---|---|--|---|
| Progressive, intensive steps of church discipline | “If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.” (Matthew 18:15) | “But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses.” (Matthew 18:16) | “If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. ...” (Matthew 18:17) | “...And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.” (Matthew 18:17) |
| Level of Church Discipline | Informal discipline | Informal discipline | Formal discipline | Formal Discipline |
| Who is involved? | Only the persons directly involved. | Persons directly involved plus 1-2 others who can be biblically discerning and objective. | Those already involved plus church leadership. | The offender’s community must be informed of the general nature of the offense and ways they can minister to those directly involved. |
| When should this step of church discipline occur? | Step 1 should be occurring everyday in gospel-driven communities and relationships. | Step 2 occurs when a person (or persons) refuses to listen and repent after being biblically approached according to the directions of step 1. | Step 3 occurs when a person (or persons) refuses to listen despite the call to faith and repentance from 2 or more people. | Step 4 occurs when a person (or persons) refuses to listen despite the call to faith and repentance from church leaders and involved community through a variety of approaches and repeated attempts. |



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| <p>Step Details</p> | <p>Examine your own actions and motivations and confess and repent if necessary.</p> <p>How to approach the person:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Deal one-on-one as soon as possible after an offense is recognized. - Speak truth in love, give grace for the moment. - Be humble, gentle, and patient. - Depending on the nature of the offense, you might try a variety of approaches and repeated attempts before proceeding to the next step. - Avoid gossip and slander. | <p>Agree on 1-2 discerning and objective people who can understand the situation and help guide involved parties. Perhaps a ministry leader or mutual friend.</p> <p>May be helpful to meet in a neutral location.</p> <p>Multiple meetings and a variety of approaches may be necessary to achieve incremental change.</p> | <p>Church leadership will investigate by meeting with those involved – listening and asking questions of the involved brought into the situation.</p> <p>Community is crucial at this step – everyone involved needs to be kept updated so that sin can be exposed and the gospel can be ministered in a loving way.</p> <p>Multiple meetings and a variety of approaches may be necessary to achieve incremental change.</p> | <p>The unrepentant person is given a final warning, explaining the action taken with this last step of church discipline.</p> <p>Excluded from communion</p> <p>Excluded from community groups</p> <p>Expelled from membership. May be asked to no longer attend weekly gatherings depending on the elders' discretion.</p> <p>Members are informed of offense and asked not to associate with the person, not as if nothing is wrong, but to call the unrepentant person to faith and repentance in the gospel.</p> |
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CONCLUSION

Veritas Church believes that the best way to deal with sin and love the sinner is through the means revealed in Scripture. Our desire to obey the Lord thus necessitates that we follow His Word.

Therefore, discipline in the life of The Veritas will follow the steps outlined in this document. Except in rather extreme and extenuating circumstances, the process should be followed with faithfulness and expectation of God's Spirit to work through His intended means.

Members of the church are expected to follow the biblical process of discipline as outlined. Therefore, the first step in instances of overt sin should be a private meeting to express concerns and correct any misunderstandings. We cannot stress strongly enough the need for confidentiality. A general principle of the discipline process is the need to "keep the circle of people involved in a conflict as small as possible for as long as possible."

In the event that the sinning brother is unrepentant, members are encouraged to ask a witness to accompany him or her for another meeting. If this too fails, the member is then asked to contact a pastor at The Veritas for further instructions on the church's response. Functionally, the third and fourth steps of the process will be carried out in the presence of two or more recognized pastors, at least one of whom being an elder.

While we never hope to need to arrive at these final steps, we fully believe that engaging in such is the best way to love a wayward brother or sister. Therefore, we will unapologetically obey the Scriptures as



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they apply in such instances. While such action may rail against our ideas of love and compassion, we trust that God will ultimately show Himself faithful and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

PERTINENT SCRIPTURES

If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that **BY THE MOUTH OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES EVERY FACT MAY BE CONFIRMED**. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.

(Matthew 18:15-17)

I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people; I did not at all mean with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters, for then you would have to go out of the world. But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler—not even to eat with such a one. For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within the church? But those who are outside, God judges. **REMOVE THE WICKED MAN FROM AMONG YOURSELVES**.

(1 Corinthians 5:9-13)

Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

(Galatians 6:1-2)

Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us. If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of that person and do not associate with him, so that he will be put to shame. Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.

(2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14-15)

Jesus said to his disciples: "Things that cause people to sin are bound to come, but woe to that person through whom they come. It would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a millstone tied around his neck than for him to cause one of these little ones to sin. So watch yourselves. If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him. If he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times comes back to you and says, 'I repent,' forgive him."

(Luke 17:1-4)

My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back, remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins.

(James 5:19-20)

