

# CORE VALUES

## **REDEEMER'S COMMUNITY GROUPS**



**REDEEMER'S FELLOWSHIP**  
VERSION 3.02 - REVISED 8/25/16

## **WATCH WHERE YOU'RE GOING**

The Bible is full of powerful images of community. The Israelites were a nation bound by God's rule. The 12 Disciples were a group bound by Jesus' teaching. Even God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are communally bound and of singular mind and will. Our Creator made us for community, and we desire to pursue it with purpose.

When the Church (people who believe in Jesus) decides to gather together in small groups for the purpose of glorifying God, we tend to bring with us a lot of things: good intentions, sin, emotional baggage, uncertainties, spiritual gifts, willpower, hopefulness, aimlessness... we're complex creatures. Yet for all our diversity, once we start looking around asking what we should do with our time in this gathering, almost invariably we will come to one conclusion—Bible study.

Bible study is a good thing. There is a place for it. But not every group should be built with it as the centerpiece. Community Groups at Redeemer's have their own core purpose. Though Bible study may be an occasional practice of Community Groups, it does not define the reason that these groups exist. Here's what does:

COMMUNITY GROUPS PURPOSE STATEMENT

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**GROUPS exist  
to create COMMUNITY  
where DISCIPLESHIP happens.**

Discipleship is the end-goal of this ministry, and should be the objective of every ministry of the Church. COMMUNITY is the unique way that GROUPS are able to cultivate discipleship, creating in its members a heart for Christ that is spurred on by the love, encouragement, and admonishment of other believers. In community we are interdependent and bound by faith in the Son of God.

Community is the distinguishing factor that makes Groups a ministry without which our church would not be fulfilling our Mission. Groups themselves are not the point—community is the point.

## **MAKE A MAP**

Once we decide on our destination, we still need to plot out our course. For that, we need some directions.

A topographical map that was drawn 100 years ago will still get you where you're going today. It's based on the same landscape, the same truth that exists in maps made today. In the same way, we believe that there are Core Values that can effectively guide and define group life because they are based on biblical principles that have never changed. Our hearts were created to desire a communal life where we are loved by others, and it is this life that the Scriptures outline for the Church through the instruction of Christ and the Apostles.

The following pages outline the 6 CORE VALUES that we believe are a reasonably comprehensive pursuit of every biblical command that guides this life we're living together. They each answer two questions:

### **What should we do?**

Jesus addressed both the things that we should *do* and the things that we should *not do* in our lives as followers who represent him.<sup>1</sup> In community we seek to uphold those commands with the belief that they are the best God has for us, and we will bring our best self to a world that needs Jesus. So these values speak first to what exactly we bring to the table of community—things Christ expects of us, and things we should seek for one another.

### **How should we do it?**

Often Jesus confronted those (like the Pharisees) who did the right things with the wrong heart. We desire to honor Jesus with our hearts first and to allow our actions to flow from that source. It is for this reason that our 6 Core Value statements speak to *the way* that we pursue our tasks and not merely to whether or not we pursue them at all.

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<sup>1</sup> Depending on the scholars you cite, you might find that the New Testament alone has in the vicinity of 1,000 commands, including roughly 59 specifically for the intra-church relationships designated by the words "One Another."

## STAY THE COURSE

You'll notice some common threads among these 6 Core Values.

**The group empowers the individual.** The effectiveness of community is not reliant on efforts of great group projects that are only possible with several people; community is effective when many people come together to be a resource that fills an individual with purpose and courage where there used to be secrecy and self-doubt. Our purpose in community is not a project or a program, but a person. It's about helping the individual next to you be won over by the love of Christ, and to live as the faithful disciple that Jesus has called them to be.

We're not a church that *has* great discipleship programs. We *are* the Church, and we live wholeheartedly towards the purpose of being disciples who make disciples.

**Groups eliminate a culture of assumption.** We want to believe that others are good people, without sin, who are capable and in control of their lives, even though we know this is not true and so does Jesus. Eliminating assumption is the most important measure of good communication, and good community doesn't happen without good communication. When we make assumptions, we do so because it is safe and/or simple. Assumption usually eschews confrontation, but in community we view confrontation as an opportunity for God's grace to shine through our actions.

If your group is not a safe place for someone to be transparent, where else are they going to do that? Community provides this unique function that you'll find almost nowhere else in the Church, and probably nowhere in any other place in our lives. We put a premium on group life because it's a place where we can *be safe* without *playing it safe*.

So we don't assume. We ask. We pry. We're invasive. And if that sounds intimidating, understand that those are all traits of strong family relationships. In Groups, people should know us deep down, and love us despite our baggage. We're learning how to be a strong family from our strong Heavenly Father.

## UNDERSTAND THE LEGEND

We want to be sure that the terms used here are interpreted through a common lens—no assumptions! So here are some definitions for biblical terms that you will see frequently in the context of Groups Ministry.

**CG(L)** - Shorthand for Community Groups (Leader)

**CHURCH** - The church is not a building or a service of worship. The Church is the people of God who identify themselves first and foremost under the authority of Jesus Christ as the Savior and Son of God. Capital “C” denotes global Church. Lower case is your local church body such as Redeemer’s Fellowship.

**COMMUNITY** - As the statement on page 2 defines, there is a *kind* of community we are seeking, and it is *one where discipleship happens*. The kind of community in Jesus’ Kingdom is full of people who know one another and are deeply invested in each other’s lives for the sake of God’s glory.

**DISCIPLESHIP (n)** - A lifestyle of following Jesus as our Master, living to be obedient to His commands, reflective of His character, and seeking first the Kingdom of Heaven and righteousness above any selfish pursuits or even basic interests and needs.

**DISCIPLING / MAKING DISCIPLES (v)** - A process of passing on one’s faith to another, not merely in knowledge, but holistically through the process of relational mentorship.

**MISSIONAL** - Built out of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19), this is a way of living and responding in keeping with the mandate of Jesus that Christians are to be people who are not defined by gathering, but by being sent as the agents by which the lost world will know the Gospel of Jesus the Savior.

**\*All Scripture will appear in this formatting, and is from the ESV translation, including citations in the footnotes.<sup>2</sup>**

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# 6 CORE VALUES OF COMMUNITY GROUPS

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DEVOTE DAILY

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PURSUE RELATIONALLY

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COUNSEL BIBLICALLY

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LIVE AUTHENTICALLY

-

ADMONISH FAITHFULLY

-

ENGAGE MISSIONALLY

# DEVOTE OURSELVES DAILY TO GOD’S WORD

It’s not possible to build a community of biblical discipleship unless we know *what* the Bible says. In a literate nation with a wealth of Bibles in print, we have to recognize that God has given us a gift that has not been afforded to the majority of history. We want to use it to allow God to speak clearly to our generation and for us to be a people who are defined by diligent seeking and following of God’s biblical commands.

God instructs us through the inspired words of David as to how we will be blessed, not by some divine favor, but by love of and adherence to Scripture.

**Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,  
 nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers;  
 but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.  
 He is like a tree planted by streams of water  
 that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither.  
 In all that he does, he prospers. <sup>3</sup>**

So what does it look like to live this truth out in community? We desire to find a fellowship with one another that is *bound by* God’s Word and where it always has a central presence of defining our way of life and our values. We seek not just to study *while* we are together, but to use our gathering to promote and encourage the *personal habit* of study. We want to ask, “*Are you meditating on God’s Word daily?*”

This foundational block is the beginning of every other practice of biblical community because it teaches us *what is* biblical.

**Table 1.01 - Identifying group health in Devoting Daily**

STAGNANT GROUPS	HOW TO MOVE →	VIBRANT GROUPS
Pretending/lying about study habits	Share your plan to study Scripture so that your group can be accountable. You need something to measure against.	Ask & share regularly what God is teaching them
Don’t ask questions of one another in group		See evident shaping of lives by Scripture
Opinion-centric dialogue		Learning to love the Word

<sup>3</sup> Psalm 1:1-3

# PURSUE PEOPLE IN OUR GROUP RELATIONALLY

Introversion is a common trait of individuals in our modern American society, yet the person who thrives off of isolation tends to appreciate a tight-knit experience with people they have learned to trust and admire.

Community is for everyone. You were made for it.

**By this all people will know that you are my disciples: if you have love for one another.<sup>4</sup>**

Your pursuits reflect the relationship you desire. When you wanted to woo that special someone you noticed back in 7th grade when your hormones woke up, you went out of your way to fold that yes/no/maybe note into intricate origami. We still build relationships by pursuit. We don't expect depth to develop only through sitting in the Group circle together for an hour a week. We follow up. We take the initiative. We send the invite. We pursue people in the week, because we want to show them they matter to us.

When we do that, we're deepening the well of the relationship, and loving one another.

Over time, relationships become the glue that creates spiritual strength in the midst of our groups. This begins with some measure of vulnerability, whether we're letting others into our life or stepping out of our comfort zone into their life. Ultimately though, we arrive at a place of relative invulnerability *because of* these relationships we've sought out. The schemes of the Devil and the temptations of sin have a formidable opponent when faced with a relationship built on the bedrock of Christ.

**Table 1.02 - Identifying group health in Pursuing Relationally**

STAGNANT GROUPS	HOW TO MOVE →	VIBRANT GROUPS
Constantly make assumptions instead of asking	Talk with your group about how you feel loved and pursued. Seek to know things about your group members that Facebook doesn't.	Know others and are known by others
Bicker about small stuff		Initiators
Avoid conflict		Responsible for one another
Always wait for others to engage first		Reliable to commitments

<sup>4</sup> John 13:35

# COUNSEL ONE ANOTHER BIBLICALLY

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Have you ever asked yourself what God’s intention is for *how* you should use Scripture? Instinctively we put it into our head, or use it to shape our personal decisions after we read it ourselves. But what about speaking it?

**All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.<sup>5</sup>**

This says that Scripture is an *able tool* that informs how we speak into our community. Through it, we can impart wisdom of the highest quality—the wisdom of God.

**And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.<sup>6</sup>**

It is not our role as CG(L)’s or members to have the answer to every question or every problem that we will face as we dive into one another’s lives. What *is* our role is to faithfully impart God’s Word over and above our own opinions. In doing so, we find the same empowerment that Christ did when confronted by Satan in Luke 4. There, Jesus used Scripture to defend His ragged spirit from Satan’s lies by staying anchored in truth.

Community Groups filter everything through the lens of this question: “*What does the Bible have to say about that?*” Rather than default to your opinions, feelings, culture, or experience, wouldn’t you prefer to give a Word from God’s own mouth to your friend? We’re not here to make smarter sinners, but to see lives transformed by Christ.

**Table 1.03 - Identifying group health in Counseling Biblically**

STAGNANT GROUPS	HOW TO MOVE →	VIBRANT GROUPS
Timid about biblical Knowledge/ relational responsibility	Humble Yourself (Be humble enough to GIVE God's counsel and not your own, and humble enough to RECEIVE godly counsel as a wisdom greater than your own.)	Biblical “know-enough’s,” not know-it-all’s
Permissive of sinful behavior		Sincerely care for one another
Self-reliant		See themselves as God’s answer to the prayers of another

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<sup>5</sup> 2 Timothy 3:16-17

<sup>6</sup> 1 Corinthians 2:13

# LIVE OUR LIVES AUTHENTICALLY

**But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.<sup>7</sup>**

Easier said than done, right? But it's not impossible, or God would never have said it. Holiness is upheld all throughout Scripture, that we would pursue it, and in the same way as the Israelites were meant to live through the Law, we are to be known by this way that we are set apart from the world, walking by the Spirit, and not gratifying the flesh.

But while we live on this Earth our heart of flesh will never truly be dead. There will always be sin, even for the regenerate<sup>8</sup> believer, and a need for confession amidst community, so that we may be cleansed by Christ of our sin.

**But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.<sup>9</sup>**

Living “in the light” is not about perfection, but about transparency. Nothing is hidden. In the light, we are seen for exactly who we are: Authentic.

Community needs our true self. There is no use for us to pretend with those who are here to serve as allies in our spiritual battles. What we will find is that when we allow our walls of self-preservation to come down, we can truly be loved by others and be at peace with God in ways that we always hoped for but never knew.

**Table 1.04 - Identifying group health in Living Authentically**

STAGNANT GROUPS	HOW TO MOVE →	VIBRANT GROUPS
Make assumptions about one another	<p><b>Be broken.</b>  <b>Everyone has sin, so don't come to a group to pretend. Be the first one to confess. In doing so you will “burst the bubble” that has kept others locked in shame thinking “I'm the only one.”</b></p>	Understand their need for the Cross and Grace
Wear masks		Create space for confession
Busy		Vulnerable with each other
Proud or embarrassed about sin		Transparent

<sup>7</sup> Galatians 5:16

<sup>8</sup> Regeneration, biblically, is the spiritual transformation of a person by the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5) that brings them out of death and into a state of eternal life. Often referred to synonymously as “saved.”

<sup>9</sup> 1 John 1:7

# ADMONISH ONE ANOTHER FAITHFULLY

A student in his Senior year of college submitted a paper in an English class with his usual confidence in the quality of the work he had turned in. Yet to his surprise, the professor returned it covered in red ink. The student took it to his professor with the intent to protest and instead found his methods confronted, and with good reason. For the first time in four years, his mistakes were unashamedly admonished. No more coasting allowed. For four years he had cultivated behaviors as a student not realizing they were wrong, and a professor straightened it out by patiently explaining the analysis behind a rather harsh D-.

The next semester was the student’s first and only 4.0. Lesson learned.

**Brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all.<sup>10</sup>**

Admonishment must happen when someone steps out willfully in sin that defies God and the values of their biblical community. Though it is difficult, if they are to be *loved well* by their community, the thing they need most is confrontation of their error.<sup>11</sup> Without loving confrontation, some people will never even recognize that they have erred.

We need people to lovingly step on our toes, yet protecting ourselves from the pain of that experience is a bad habit we’ve probably cultivated over the course of our lives. Community is where we learn to let that go, to experience the freedom that comes through accountability, and the grace that comes through admonishment.

**Table 1.05 - Identifying group health in Admonishing Faithfully**

STAGNANT GROUPS	HOW TO MOVE →	VIBRANT GROUPS
Don’t use “red ink” with each other	Give and get PERMISSION to step on one another’s toes. Cultivate in the group an expectation of exposure and accountability.	Clear about expectations of obedience to Christ
Fear confrontation		Held responsible for our actions
Interpret “love” as peace, not peacemaking		Believe the best in the motives of others; trust is high
Self-righteous comparisons		Criticism exists

<sup>10</sup> 1 Thessalonians 5:14

<sup>11</sup> A good example of this is found in 1 Corinthians 5, biblical confrontation method is cited in Matthew 18:15-18.

# ENGAGE OUR CULTURE MISSIONALLY

Who in your culture (your workplace, neighborhood, coffee shop on your commute) knows what Jesus looks like because of you? This question doesn't mean, who believes in Jesus because of you? But rather, who are you being a living image of Christ to, and by doing so, giving them an encounter with the Gospel of the One who can save them?

This is a question we should always be asking of ourselves as Christians. It's what we mean when we ask ourselves, "Am I living missionally?"

The familiar children's song *This Little Light Of Mine* makes a personal proclamation out of this passage from Jesus' Sermon On The Mount:

**You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.<sup>12</sup>**

"Am I shining, or am I hiding?" Jesus gave us the light so that it would be plainly seen through us. While a group can mobilize together towards some big objectives in the realm of Mission, we must always make the central objective of our community to push the *individual* to a life that is bent towards living out the Mission of Jesus in the mundane rhythms of our daily lives. No plans necessary. Just shine.

**Table 1.06 - Identifying group health in Engaging Missionally**

STAGNANT GROUPS	HOW TO MOVE →	VIBRANT GROUPS
Never arrive at maturity	<b>Ask what we're passionate about, what lights our fire?                      Identify the needs that exist in your immediate world and how God would be able to use you.</b>	Have a "what's next" mentality
Practice risk-aversion		Pay attention to the world around them
Marked by self-centered priorities		Willing, even if not always able
Wrongly define "missions" <sup>13</sup>		Living with intention

<sup>12</sup> Matthew 5:14-16

<sup>13</sup> "Missions" are not overseas, or in impoverished neighborhoods. We're sent at the moment we confirm Christ in baptism to be on a daily mission to deliver the Gospel to the Lost. It's easy to assess whether or not you went on your church's "Mission Trip" this year. Assess honestly: Did you go on the Mission Jesus sent you on *today*?

## DO WE MEASURE UP?

Here's how we want to apply these values:

### **Measure our group health.**

Group health is a subjective notion that we are trying to make more concrete by adhering to these values. These are measurable traits<sup>14</sup> that we can use to identify whether they are evident in our community, or whether we are deficient in one or several of these biblical qualities. They allow us to look at specific qualities and say, "*Are we living this out?*"

Groups should have purpose. At Redeemer's, groups exist to create community where discipleship happens. If your group is vibrant in these six categories, it will be because you've intentionally pursued them, and have become mature disciples who are actively engaging your culture and training up others to follow The Way of Jesus.

### **Provide a framework for accountability.**

In your group, regularly and intentionally employ these principles. Don't just study them—do them! These aren't to be relegated to become objects of study; they're made for action! People in your group should be asking you questions like this:

*What did God teach you through your time in His Word this week? **Devote Daily***

*Are you being the submissive wife God is calling you to be in Ephesians 5? How is your husband doing about loving you sacrificially? **Counsel Biblically***

*Who is a friend or neighbor you're desiring to see come to know Christ? Are you praying for them, and how can I pray for your witness in their life? **Engage Missionally***

None of us are "group cops" but if God's ways do not govern our way of life, then what will? By living out these values we are being faithful to the biblical commands to pursue righteousness *together* and to behave dependently in that pursuit, so that we might be effective disciples. All things we do are for the glory of God, that the world might know Jesus *because of us*.

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<sup>14</sup> The books that comprise the Bible are referred to as the **canon**. This comes from a Greek word that means "measuring stick, ruler." Not surprisingly, our biblical Core Values become the measurement for how we are living our Christian life together.

## A MESSAGE TO YOU FROM PASTOR KORY MERENESS

***My hope for your experience in your Community Group is that you finally encounter a community where you feel like what you're doing together has purpose. I hope you won't settle and sit in a circle where your life isn't being changed, or where you are always suspicious that you are not the only one who wants more. I hope you will insist on relationships that provide life-giving love and expect that you will look back every year and realize how much you've changed and see tangible ways that God used you to bless someone else's life. I hope you will find people you trust so much that you cease to fear "wounds from a friend" (Prov 27:6) and instead begin to depend on people who love you enough to sooner tell you what is true rather than what you desire to hear. I hope you find a place where you can show up broken, that your need for the Cross is always elevated and expected in your community, and that it will create an abiding peace in your heart that surpasses the understanding of your common acquaintances. I hope that in community you can: Put your roots down. Be nourished by God's Word and the fellowship of believers. Confront and overcome sin in your own life and in the life of another. And that you will ultimately look at yourself and say with confidence "I'm exactly where I want to be in my relationship with God—in pursuit of Christ, at peace with Salvation, and all-in for the Mission of making the Gospel known."***

***You were made for Community.***



“Where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am among them.”

**Jesus**