

COMMUNITY
GROUP
PLAYBOOK

STONENEWATER
CHURCH

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What Are You Talk'n About?

We know our families have very busy schedules and are pulled in many different directions. We know that developing growing relationships in today's culture is difficult. We know it is hard to find time outside of Sunday morning to meet with other believers. But we also believe that God uses relationships in powerful ways to grow us spiritually. That is why we feel involvement in Community Groups is critical to the strength of our church.

Everyone

Amen!

What is a Community Group (CG)? – A small group of believers committed to encouraging one another, caring for one another, accepting one another and supporting one another through accountable and growing relationships while studying and living out God's Word. CGs are designed to create safe environments that allow people to grow spiritually through relationships. They are designed simple and small in order to allow for trust and communication to grow over time.

Keep it small. "To grow larger, we have to become smaller." -Jeremy

What is the purpose of a CG?

- To create growing relationships with other believers.
- To create a place where you can be known and accepted by others.
- To have a group of people who encourage and challenge your spiritual growth.
- To have people who care for you and support you in everyday life.
- To have people who hold you accountable to reaching the lost.

Get real

How are they organized?

- CGs are encouraged to limit size to 3-5 couples, or 3-5 single men or women.
- CGs can meet at anytime and anywhere outside of the church. Groups are encouraged to meet 3-4 times/month.
- You will invite people into your CG and the groups will not be publicized. (that's easy)
- Groups will commit to meet together for a year.
- Groups can launch or begin meeting at anytime throughout the year.

What do we do in a CG?

- Be intentional about meeting with a spiritual purpose to grow through relationships.
- Study the Bible or biblical studies, review the sermon, or discuss topics as they relate to scripture.
- Pray together, eat together, play together, grow together.

This is not a social club, but you will grow to love and like these people
-Jeremy

What are the ground rules for a Community Group?

- To meet with a spiritual purpose (BODW!)
 - To encourage, care for, accept and keep one another accountable
 - To keep in contact with one another throughout the week- calls, texts, emails, etc.
- (Every 48hrs is a good rule of thumb)

I LOVE FOOD -ERIC

THAT'S IT- SMALL, SIMPLE and FLEXIBLE!!

Just like Pastor Dennis! 😊

This Will Never Work...

No negative nellies allowed!

-Brad

1) If I decide to be in a Community Group, I'm afraid I will lose connections with other friends.

A Community Group is intended to be made up of friends that are willing to be held accountable by one another, that are willing to encourage and care for one another and that are willing to commit to meet weekly with the purpose to grow spiritually. This is a group where great trust is developed over time. These are very unique and intentional relationships. But these are not the only relationships we should have. We also need mentors in our life, or people that we are spiritually speaking into. We need relationships with people who do not know Jesus and relationships with just good buddies we like to have fun with. Community Groups provide an environment for a specific relationship that we believe will make you even better in all of your other relationships. Be purposeful about maintaining other connections with friends, realizing the environments and relationships may be different.

You don't lose other friends, you're just intentional with these.

"I need my group for me to stay the course."
-Jeremy

2) Since people choose their Community Group, I believe groups will become inward focused.

StoneWater has been and will continue to reach the lost for Jesus. Our mission is to reach and equip. We will equip our people through Community Groups so that the members in the group can reach multiple generations of unbelievers. We believe the best way to reach the lost is through a personal relationship. In Community Groups, we will be providing training and resources on how we, as members, can invite people to church, share our own testimony or grace story and lead someone to a relationship with Jesus. Community Groups are designed for members within the group to hold one another accountable to inviting their friends to church, sharing their faith, serving in ministry and connecting with others outside the group. We call equipping through groups "deepening our roots in order to widen our reach". God has called each one of us to make disciples.

It's your base for ministry. Get fueled and go out and reach the lost.

so true!

Your group should challenge you to win some to Jesus. If they don't, they are not doing their job.

sounds like Jesus

-Joey

3) How is the church going to help groups stay on track with the purpose, mission and vision of our church?

Community Groups are designed to provide flexibility pertaining to when you meet and what you study. However, groups also must maintain a spiritual focus in order to grow. A Community Group will be assigned a Support Team Member that will assist in providing training and resources to groups for study and discussion. StoneWater will also provide a library of approved studies for groups to utilize. Health Checks or surveys will be required to be taken by groups that will monitor what is being discussed, what is being studied and the overall health of the group. These assessments help ensure that the group is on track and that members feel the conversations or advice are biblically sound.

Don't get squirrely

great idea

4) What do I do if I cannot be involved in a Community Group right now?

StoneWater understands that not everyone may be able to commit to a Community Group at this time. Although we believe this is the best way to grow in your faith within the church, we want to provide multiple opportunities to connect in relationships with others. All ministries within our church focus on connecting people with others and providing environments to grow through those relationships. People may connect through serving on a team on Sunday morning, joining an Open Group, being a part of Re-Engage, connecting with other men on Sundays through Men at Work or by attending a StoneWater U equipping class. All of these ministries strive to connect people through relationships and encourage further connections through Community Groups.

We got OPTIONS! -Jeremy



Pick'em Wisely

Okay, so I have a general idea of what a Community Group is and I'm interested. How do I decide whom to ask to be in community with and what do I say to them?

Let God choose my group! -Brad

1. Pray for God to reveal people that you would like to invite into your Community Group. CGs may have 3-5 couples, 3-5 single women, or 3-5 single men.
2. Identify people you are willing to commit to potentially meet with for the next year.
3. Identify people who are willing to take the next step in their faith through growing relationships.
4. Read through the Community 101 Material
 - Are your potential members authentic, accepting, caring, encouraging, and willing to 'do' accountability?
5. Here are some key questions to think about when asking someone to join your CG:
 - Do I respect this person and how they live their life?
 - Do I see this person wanting to grow in their relationship with God?
 - Do I think this person will keep group conversations confidential?
 - Am I willing to invest in getting to know this person more?
6. Contact potential members to see how they feel about Community Groups. Talk with them about how God has put it on your heart to grow deeper in relationship with them and why.
7. Allow people time to process the information, pray about the decision to join, and then give them a reasonable amount of time to expect a follow up phone conversation with you. Provide an opportunity for questions to address any concerns they may have. Pray that God will give you a heart of grace for that person regardless of their response to your invitation. God knows who you need to be in community with and it may be someone unexpected!! *Take a risk*
8. Set up a meeting time and place with your group members.

Be up front and honest about your expectations. -Casey

who will sharpen you

*Don't be scared men, lead out in this.
Don't make your wife.
-Jeremy*

Where Can I Meet People?

There are several ways to connect with people to form new Community Groups or add to existing groups.

- **Open Groups** are available throughout the week to serve as an onramp to community. These groups are facilitated by folks who want to provide an environment for people to connect to one another and create new small groups. Open groups have a set schedule, time and location which meets for 7-10 weeks. We have groups to accommodate couples, singles, young adults, men, women and empty nesters. Please go to OpenGroups.StoneWaterChurch.com to see which groups are currently available.
- **Re-Engage Marriage Ministry** is a great way to build your relationship with your spouse, grow deeper in your faith, and develop new friendships. The re-engage model is designed for small group interactions of 6-8 couples who disciple one another and share life for 16 weeks. This program is valuable for every marriage, at any stage, whether you are engaged or have been married for 30+ years. Go to ReEngage.StoneWaterChurch.com for more information.
- **Serving** in ministry is a wonderful way to meet people who have the same interests and are in a similar stage of life. Go to Serve.StoneWaterChurch.com.
- **Connecting Events** will be hosted periodically throughout the year to help new people connect and existing groups to find new members. You will get notifications of all Community Group activities by adding your phone to our community texting service. Text “CGGranbury” to the number 94033.
- **StoneWater University** classes incorporate group discussions into their curriculum so that you can better connect to the people in your class. Several community groups have started out of StoneWater University. Find more information about availability of classes at SWU.StoneWaterChurch.com.
- **Men at Work** meets every Sunday for fellowship and to provide service work in the community.
- **Missions** work can be done in your backyard or across the globe. Meet people who have the same passion as you do to spread the gospel of Christ. Check out all upcoming trips or mission opportunities at Missions.StoneWaterChurch.com.

Let's Do This Thing!!!

**Now that you have your Community Group...LETS GET STARTED.
Before your first meeting, you'll want to:**

- 1) Contact your group to set up a time and location for the first meeting. Have two to three dates pre-selected and see which one fits the members' schedules best. It is best to schedule the first meeting within two weeks of your first contact.
Work it so that everyone can be there.
- 2) Confirm the date and time once decided so there is no confusion about the schedule. Communication within the group can take many forms: email, group texting, GroupMe texting, or phone calls. Make sure the mode of communication suits all ^{Good one} members of your group.
- 3) Decide among the group where your first meeting will be held, how your group will handle childcare that week, and who will participate in preparing a meal or snacks that week. Someone's home is recommended for the first meeting.
- 4) Allow at least an hour and a half for the first meeting in order to cover logistical issues such as future scheduling, meeting locations, babysitting, food preparation, etc.
- 5) We recommend providing food at your first scheduled meeting to create a family atmosphere. Food could be provided by one or two families, a potluck, or chip in to order out. Someone could provide food for adults and another be responsible for feeding the kiddos.

First Meeting

- 1) Allow for the first 30 minutes to be spent eating and visiting. Offer to pray for the meal and your time together.
- 2) Get to know each other by letting each family introduce themselves. Spend a few minutes describing what community is, celebrating how your group has been brought together and how you are excited to see where God will lead it.
- 3) Provide a copy of Community 101 to each couple in the group if they do not already have one. Spend a few minutes looking through Community 101, including the suggested schedule on page 3. At the bottom of the suggested schedule is also direction to help them "tell their story" at some point during the first couple of weeks.

- 4) Decide as a group if they would like to continue through Community 101 as suggested in the schedule, and if so, read and discuss the questions in Community 101 regarding Community and Acceptance.
- 5) Communicate to the group that they have committed to meet as a group for 6 weeks, and after the 6 weeks, each group member will have the option to continue in the group.
- 6) Logistics: Spend the last 20 minutes discussing the logistics for the upcoming meetings as you progress through Community 101. This will be approximately 6 weeks. (note: The following items may need to be discussed in multiple conversations, emails, texts, etc.)
 - a. When will we meet as we progress through Community 101? Be creative in order to accommodate each other's schedules. It is not necessary to meet at the same time and day every week.
 - b. Where will we meet? We recommend meeting in different *Rotation yes!* locations if possible.
 - c. How will we address childcare in the near term?
 - d. How will we handle eating arrangements?
 - e. What will be our primary method of communication to the group (text, email, phone call, etc.)?
- 7) End in prayer and reconfirm your next meeting time and location.
- 8) At your first meeting, determine who will be the primary contact with the Community Groups Coordinator at StoneWater Church. Register your group at **NewCommunityGroup.StoneWaterChurch.com**. Include the following information:
 - a. Date you began meeting
 - b. Number of members in your group, including yourself.
 - c. Name, phone number and email address of the primary contact for the group.
 - d. Names of all group members.
- 9) Have everyone download the StoneWater App and look at the Groups tab for more community info.
- 10) Recommend for members to each complete a CG Personal Assessment on the App and discuss at the next meeting.

Our group had success setting a regular day and then shifting it if needed. -Casey

Define expectations! -Brad

Decide as a group possible reasons to miss the group meeting. Being tired should not be a legitimate reason. -Jeremy

Community 101

Here are a few tips to help you as you progress through the Community 101 Workbook with your group.

- 1) People enjoy eating. *TRUE DAT! -ERIC* Work as a group to provide some type of meal or snack for each of your meetings.
- 2) Begin each meeting with prayer and a time for people to celebrate what God is doing in their lives. *Hang out with a purpose.*
- 3) Provide an opportunity to share any stories since the last meeting and also any questions pertaining to the previous weeks study.
- 4) Building trust within the group is key. Take a few minutes to discuss confidentiality within the group and how this will be handled. Discuss how you will handle sharing information with spouses.
- 5) We have found that designating certain meeting times for only men or only women is extremely valuable. Look for weeks that men can meet with just men and the same for women. *YES*
- 6) Ensure everyone is clear where and when the next meeting is.
- 7) Look for opportunities to encourage different members of the group to be responsible for food, childcare, scheduling, group communication, etc. These responsibilities could rotate each week as well.
- 8) End in prayer each week. This is a great time to ask for prayer requests from members in the group.
- 9) A major component to Community Groups is maintaining connections with group members throughout the week. Look for opportunities to text, email, call or visit between meetings. Group members should strive to have some type of communication with group members of the same gender every 48-72 hours. *TRY GROUP ME APP -ERIC*

Play tag. Call someone and then have them call someone else.

-Jeremy

Set boundaries. Men should not call or text women unless their wife is copied.

As you near the end of Community 101 Workbook, here are a few things to consider and address as a group.

- 1) Your group will need to decide if you would like to continue to meet together for the next several months. Community Groups are designed to provide for authentic relationships and we know this takes time. We recommend Community Groups commit to meeting for a year.

2) If you group decides to continue meeting, have each member sign the Community Group Commitment. The document can be found at CommunityGroups.StoneWaterChurch.com.

3) Your group will need to discuss future meeting times:

- a. When will we meet?
- b. How far in advance will we schedule meetings? (8-12 weeks)
- c. How frequently will we meet? Days may change based on availability.
- d. Who wants to be in charge of scheduling?
- e. Decide when is it okay to miss group meetings (what events)?
- f. How much time will we spend together inside and outside of the group?
- g. Scheduling resources are available at:
CommunityGroups.StoneWaterChurch.com.

LOVE PLANNING!

4) Your group will need to discuss future meeting locations:

- a. Where will we meet? Be creative and look for alternative locations (homes/parks/service projects/picnics/events)
- b. Brainstorm on some fun places to go for fellowship (family, adults only, men/women separate)
- c. Location resources and ideas are available at:
CommunityGroups.StoneWaterChurch.com.

*We like variety!
Homes, restaurants,
community pools!*

5) Your group will need to discuss how you will address childcare:

- a. Look for opportunities to meet at locations where kids can play (parks, restaurants with outdoor spaces, playgrounds, etc.)
- b. Consider having your group contribute funds for a group sitter.
- c. If men and women are meeting separate, take turns watching the kids?
- d. Designate certain weeks where each group member is responsible for childcare on their own.
- e. Designate someone who focuses on childcare options for the group.
- f. Additional childcare resources, ideas, and policies are available at:
CommunityGroups.StoneWaterChurch.com.

*In my group, everyone
takes care of their
own kids.*

6) Your group will need to discuss your expectations for communication within the group:

- a. Decide as group how you want to get information to one another. (text, email, GroupMe) *Everyone participates. Don't leave it to your leader.*
- b. Decide who is going to be responsible for sending out group information.
- c. Decide which information goes to the whole group and what needs to stay between the men or women.
- d. Talk about expectations for communicating outside of group to encourage one another, pray for one another, and be accountable to contact one another throughout the week.
- e. Additional communication resources are available at:
CommunityGroups.StoneWaterChurch.com.

Life After Community 101

Before we provide some direction regarding future meetings and studies, there may be a few things you want to discuss first.

1. Review how the past meeting schedules have worked for everyone in the group.
2. Open discussion regarding the vision and values of Community Groups and ensure everyone is clear on how you will treat each other as you move forward.
3. Community Groups will not be for everyone. Some schedules cannot accommodate a year commitment. Some will seek community with other individuals or through other ministries within the church. Your group will need to discuss these departures and ensure there are no relationships that need to be cleared up before you move forward.
4. Members within your group may have other friends asking to join the group. Your group will need to discuss how these inquiries will be handled. *Speak up with love.* What is the process for new people to join the group? Is it a group decision? Will the group permit the addition of new members at anytime during the year? These are sensitive conversations that need to be treated with the utmost care.
Visit CommunityGroups.StoneWaterChurch.com to find more resources on how to lead people through these difficult conversations.
5. Ensure any new members added to the group have signed the Group Commitment and understand the group's expectations.
6. Complete a Community Group Update form to keep our records current at CGUpdate.StoneWaterChurch.com after the initial 6 week period.

Alright, we are ready to begin life after the Community 101 Workbook. What do we do now?

1. Determine what you will study:

Each community group can determine how they will maintain a spiritual focus at each of their meetings. Community Groups are designed to create environments for spiritual relationships that lead to life change. God's Word has to be at the center of this. This may look like a traditional, formal bible study for the group or separate bible studies for the men and women. Some groups may choose to do their own personal devotional and discuss what they are learning with the other members of the group. Groups can also look at topical resources if they maintain a

spiritual component for discussion. Groups can rotate discussion leaders each week or keep a primary person in that role. Community Groups are designed to be as flexible as possible. Pray for God's Spirit to lead you personally and your group to determine what your discussion focus will be. Great Bible studies, writing sermon questions, relational questions and additional ideas and resources can be found at: CommunityGroups.StoneWaterChurch.com. If your group decides to work through a Bible study as an entire group, we do ask that you submit it to CommunityGroups@StoneWaterChurch.com for approval.

2. Determine the structure of your meetings:

Each group has the ability to structure their meeting time to fit their needs. The group should always begin with prayer for the past weeks' events and end with prayer requests for the upcoming week. Make time to check in with all members about life and any needs regarding accountability or support. Keep acceptance and confidentiality at the forefront when you open the floor for concerns or questions. Ensure that your discussions stay on track with a spiritual purpose and institute a facilitator if your group finds this challenging. Look at changing up your meeting times with group discussions as well as time for the men and women to meet separately. Keep the meetings fun and engaging by changing up the location or venue for family fun.

MEN - EARLY MORNING
WOMEN - LATE EVENING
-ERIC

3. Outline expectations for the group members:

Determine as a group where this community group will rate in importance relative to other activities and priorities. Discuss the groups' definition of commitment to supporting, accepting, and encouraging one another. It will be important to determine how your group will approach accountability with one another. It will take time to build trust in the group regarding accepting wise counsel and gentle reproach given in love. Emphasize often the importance of confidentiality within the group. A primary function of a community group is to create a safe atmosphere to discuss life's struggles and that requires trust in confiding with fellow believers. The group should also discuss expectations regarding the frequency of connecting via phone calls, texts, emails, hanging out and being checked on so that everyone is equally responsible to make efforts to connect with one another throughout the week.

Stay connected!
-Brad

4. Never cease to seek God's Word, God's People and God's Spirit:

Keeping a spiritual focus during group meetings requires keeping Gods Word as the ultimate reference on any issue or discussion. The group needs to discuss how to deal with personal issues as they arise and how you will process an issue with Scripture. The group may find itself having to handle opinions and advice not based on God's Word. It is important for your group to predetermine guidelines on how to support, encourage, and care for one another with Scripture. Find great resources to help you at CommunityGroups.StoneWaterChurch.com for dealing with many different situations.

God's Word
trumps your
opinions.
-Jeremy

THIS IS THE FINAL AUTHORITY

Are We Doing This Right?

We know that everyone's Community Group is going to look different. Groups will be studying different materials, discussing different events in their lives, experiencing different joys and heartaches, having completely different meeting structures, etc. Community Groups have been designed for just this. They have been organized in a way to allow for more natural relationship development. But, how do we remain unified as a church and all striving for spiritual growth? How will the church equip and shepherd our group spiritually? One of the best ways we as a church can equip your group is for your group to take a Community Health Check.

What is a Community Health Check?

A tool designed to let the members of your community group evaluate how the group is meeting their needs in the areas of care, acceptance, encouragement and accountability when it comes to their spiritual growth. The Community Health Check is just that, a check-up or gauge on how well the group is functioning.

Why are we doing a Health Check?

The commitment to walk through life together and hold each other accountable to the values of community is the glue that holds Community Groups together. The purpose of the Health Check is to hold your group accountable to the Church in what you are studying and how you are building up one another as disciples. The Health Check allows your Community Group Coordinator to provide your group with coaching and resources to meet the needs of group members. Through the check, we can evaluate where members feel the group is excelling and desiring to grow.

Is the Health Check required for our group?

This is a requirement that the church places on Community Group members. It is important for the pastoral staff to evaluate how effective the groups are at creating environments for growing relationships that lead to life change. The Health Check helps ensure your group meets with a spiritual purpose. It also provides the Church an opportunity to supply your group with resources to address any issues. These **MUST** be completed by every member of your group at least 2 times per year. It is critical for groups to evaluate their progress to make improvements that strengthen the group.

What will StoneWater do with the information?

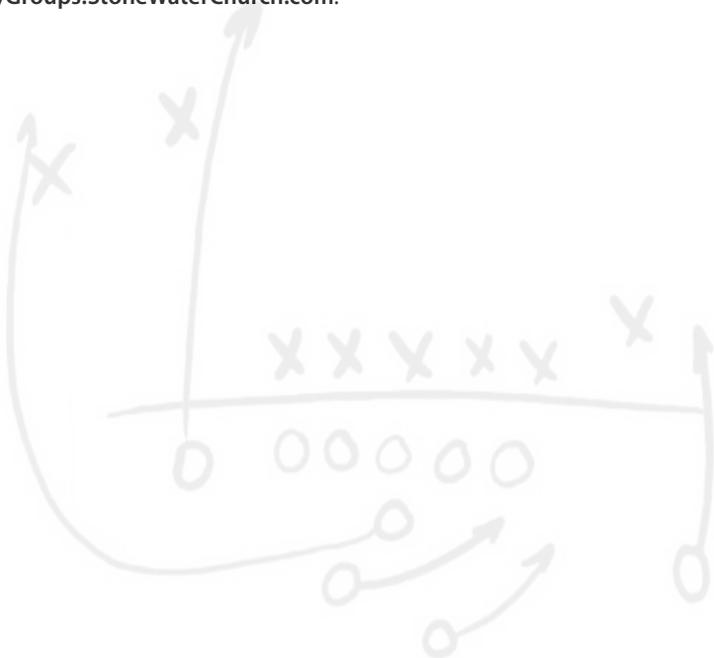
The Community Group Support Member for your group will review the responses and if needed, make suggestions on how to further improve the group or make recommendations for great resources. We may provide the group with scriptural resources, bible study recommendations, or meet with members to provide guidance on handling an issue within the group. Each Health Check submitted will be kept confidential and will not be distributed to other members of the group. We do, however, encourage group members to share with other members of their group the areas they feel are not meeting expectations.

How often will we do a Health Check?

The first Health Check is required 4 weeks after you complete Community 101. The Community Group Coordinator will remind your group to complete a Health Check 6 months after the initial check.

Where do I get the Health Check?

The Health Check form is available on the Community Groups webpage or on the StoneWater App under the Groups tab. Go to CommunityGroups.StoneWaterChurch.com.



Where Do We Go From Here?

Well...You have been in community for a while now...What do I need to be thinking about?

As you near the end of the first year of your community group, it is time to evaluate how you have grown as a group and as an individual. Here are some important questions to ask in evaluating the future of the group:

- 1) Have you experienced spiritual transformation in your group?
- 2) What is the evidence of spiritual transformation of others in your group?
- 3) Is there a healthy balance of socializing, Bible study, prayer and service?
- 4) Is the group environment warm, authentic, safe and accepting?
- 5) Are your discussions anchored in the Word?
- 6) Does everyone leave spiritually challenged, and with focused and practical application from the Word?
- 7) Are group members comfortable praying with one another and are members consistently praying on their behalf?
- 8) Has the group dedicated time and resources to serving others this year?
- 9) Have group members shared the responsibilities of running the group?
- 10) Are the "tough" issues of life being discussed in your community group?
- 11) How well is your group sharing life together outside of your meeting times?
- 12) Are group members adhering to the Community Group Commitment they signed?
- 13) When a commitment is broke, is it being addressed to the person?
- 14) Are members involved in an accountability relationship with 1-2 people of the same gender?
- 15) During accountability, are members asking the tough questions with truth and grace?
- 16) Should we keep the same members, contemplate new additions, or pursue other environments in the church to develop growing relationships?
- 17) What are some areas that you would like to see addressed if the group continues?

It is important for your community group to discuss the individual vision for the future of the group before committing to another year. We want your time together to be enjoyable, fruitful, uplifting, and a blessing to your spiritual growth. Discussions about the strengths and weaknesses of the group will help to design a roadmap for the next 12 months. Brainstorm on new ways to infuse life and fun into the group, examine any areas that may need outside help or resources to resolve issues, and look for ways to encourage one another more as your relationships grow deeper.

What are the choices for our group?

- Re-commit yourselves to the group for the next year
- Keep the group and add new members if you have room or someone decides to depart.
- Keep some members of the group together while the rest split off to create a new group.
- Dissolve and encourage members to join another community group.

