

What is a **GROUP**?



An Aligned Approach to Discipleship Through Community

In a discipleship culture, a group is more than a meeting. It's a disciple-making environment where people grow in Christlikeness, build real relationships, and multiply the mission. A group is not a program; it's a relational environment where every participant is noticed, named, and known, the three steps towards belonging. Definitions that shape our culture for discipleship:

- *Discipleship*: A life-long process by which a follower of Jesus Christ grows toward Christlikeness and multiplies the experience.
- *Disciple*: A committed, passionate follower of Jesus Christ.

Group Names Matter for Clarity

All groups at the small group layer serve the same mission, and that mission should be clear in the name whether your church uses terms like: Sunday School, Small Groups, Life Groups, Community Groups, etc. What matters is clarity. Use one consistent name to reinforce shared purpose and avoid confusion or competition. This strengthens unity in the small group layer of our Disciple-Making Environments, which include:

Large Gatherings

- Jesus preached to the masses
- Where the Word is proclaimed broadly
- Ie. Worship, Large Events

Micro Groups

- Jesus invested in 3
- Where the Word is applied intimately
- Ie. Gender specific, fewer than 5 people

Small Groups

- Jesus relationally taught the 12
- Where the Word is discussed relationally
- Ie. Less than 20 people

Personal Walk

- Jesus spent time with the Father
- Where the disciple walks closely with the Father
- Ie. Mentoring and spiritual disciplines

Discipleship, Not Daycare

If a group meets when the church does not offer children's discipleship, the group is responsible for providing it. We don't babysit, we disciple. One practical option is to let a mature youth teach the children using a simplified version of the adult lesson. This provides youth with a leadership opportunity and enables the group to support their growth, such as helping to fund their camp or mission trip.

Groups Don't Launch from Spreadsheets

Relational groups are not recruited or promoted like sign-up sheets. They grow through on-ramp events, such as Group Launch Sundays, or relational invitations from volunteers, leaders, or ministers, as a next step. Remember, lonely people don't raise their hands, so groups must be made accessible and personal.

Each group should clearly state its affinity (e.g., Married, Single, Tuesday Bowling), along with the meeting times and locations, the target audience, and the frequency of meetings. This clarity makes it easier for newcomers to take the next step toward feeling a sense of belonging.

Aligned Groups Multiply More

When all groups share the same mission and vision as the church, it creates flexibility in meeting times and locations. That allows more people to be discipled, regardless of the space the church can provide with its facilities.