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RE-IMAGINING DISCIPLESHIP


Converging Ideas & Events

- **A Journey of Grace**
 - Nazarene Discipleship Framework
- **COVID-19 Pandemic**
 - *Opportunity to Restart*
 - *Opportunity to Reflect*
 - *Opportunity to Reprioritize*




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THE JOURNEY OF GRACE




THE WAY
prevenient grace

God PREPARES the path before us. His hand reaches out and beckons us to Him, drawing us into a deeper relationship with Him. This grace both precedes our response and enables our response.



THE TRUTH
saving grace

Jesus RESCUES us from sin and leads us into the truth that sets us free. We receive the gift of saving grace by believing in God. He redeems us, makes us a new creation, and adopts us into His family.



THE LIFE
sanctifying grace

The Holy Spirit EMPOWERS us to live a life fully consecrated to God. Sanctifying grace begins the moment we experience salvation. Initial sanctification is followed by spiritual growth in grace until, in a moment of full consecration and complete surrender on our part, God purifies and cleanses the heart.

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2020: OPPORTUNITIES

Restart



Paused all programming, then focused on worship service before restarting SDMI (opportunity to stop S.S., start small groups, and reformat mid-week)

Reflect



Why do we do what we do?
Thinking theologically and practically

Reprioritize



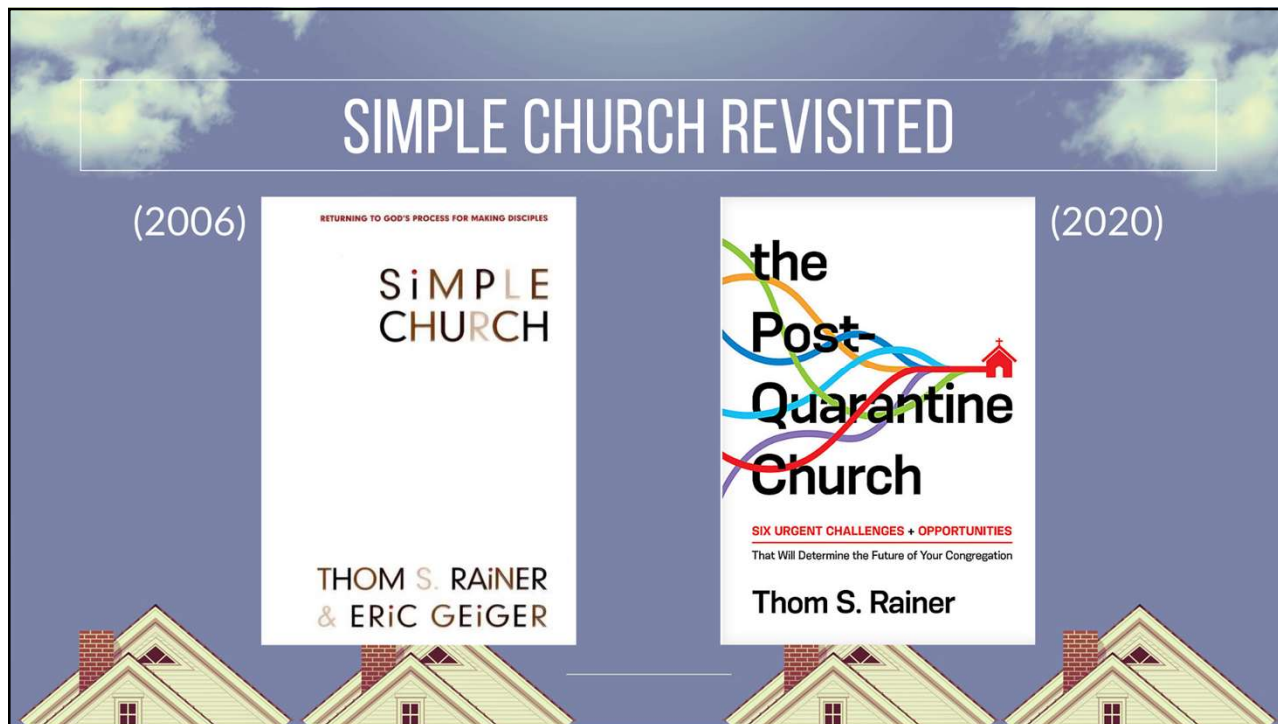
Collective acknowledgement that we have been too busy (call back to "Simple Church" philosophy)

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GUIDING RESOURCES & MODELS



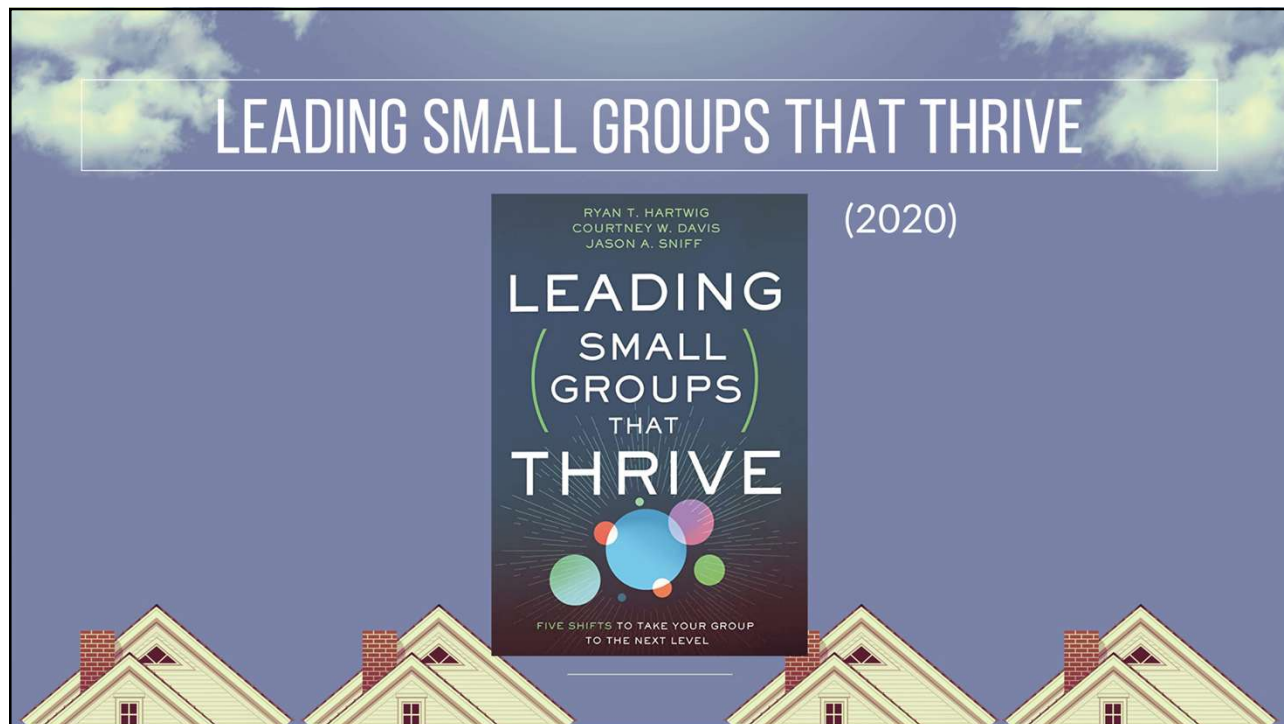
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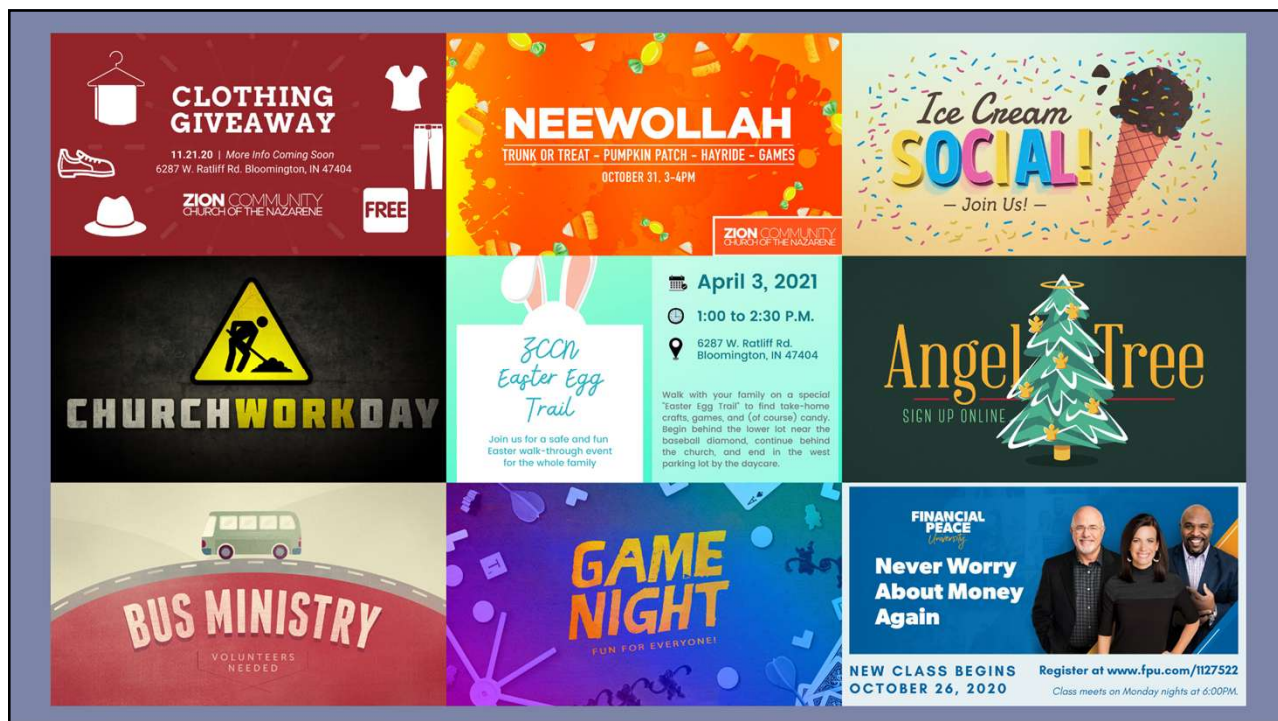
SIMPLE CHURCH REVISITED

- Churches need a clear plan of discipleship.
- Communicate your discipleship process through your vision statement.
- Focus on the areas that are primary to your church's mission, and (if possible) eliminate everything else.
 - *Churches often busy themselves trying to do too many things that are not essential to the core mission - causing volunteers to burnout and members to miss connection with community.*

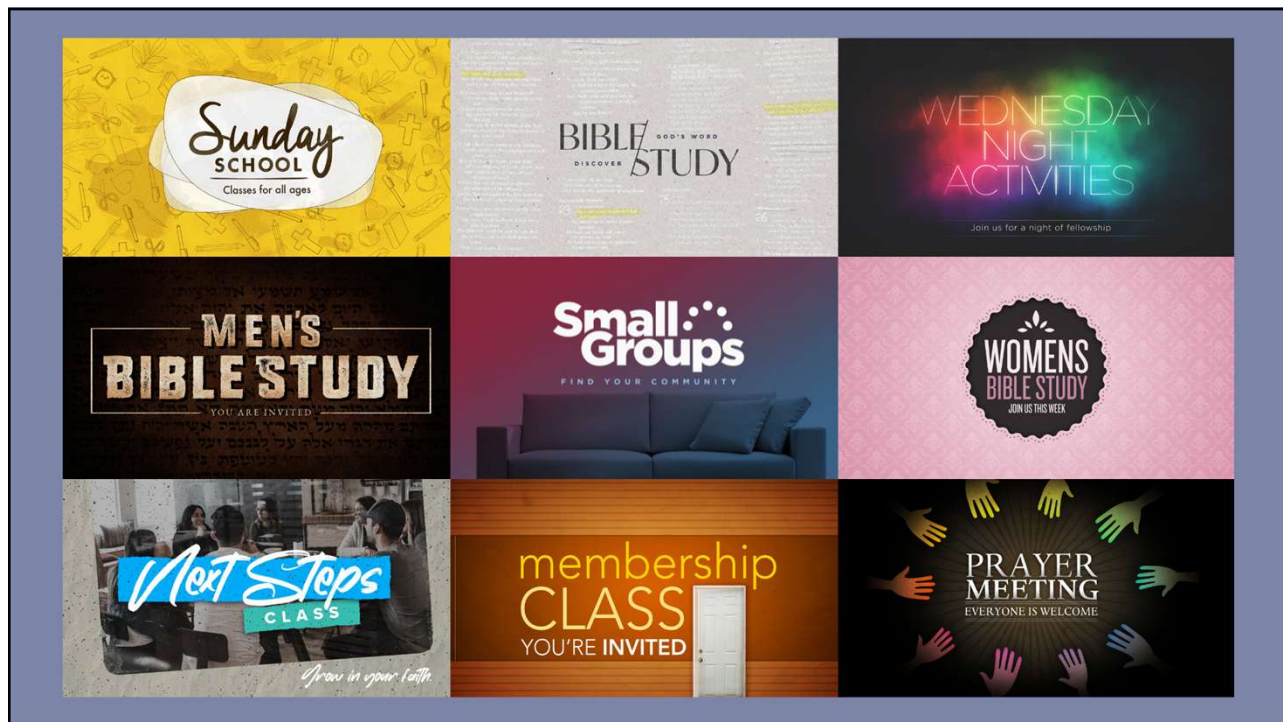
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DISCIPLES WHO MAKE DISCIPLES

7 BASICS OF BELONGING
THE MEANING OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP
SAM RAINER
(2021)

- Discipleship is a lifelong journey of becoming more like Christ.
- Spiritual growth is a key purpose of the church. (Deeper faith individually; Wider reach corporately)
- 83% of people will stay in a church if they attend worship services and also join a small group. Only 16% of people will stay in the church if they attend a worship service only and never join a group.
- "Most people *start* attending a church through the worship service, but most people *stay* in a church because of their connection to a group." - Sam Rainer

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THE POWER OF COMMUNITY

- The goal of community groups, home groups, and discipleship groups is to help people take steps forward in their journeys with Jesus, cultivate friendships, and engage in meaningful discipleship relationships.
- Small groups - whether meeting in homes or at your church - are where community happens. Small groups *are* the church.
- Groups can provide a sense of belonging, tangibly meet the needs of neighbors, schools, and communities; and become a light that shines into the darkness of this world.

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ACTS 2:42-47

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

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WHY SMALL GROUPS?

Small:::Groups
FIND YOUR COMMUNITY



The early church then, and small groups now (when done well), provide:

- Purpose.
- Devotion.
- Shared Ownership.
- Irresistability.
- A place to engage the messiness of life.

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CREATING COMMUNITY

- **People need community.**
 - Our culture craves for significant relationships.
 - God has called the church to create environments where authentic community can take place.
 - Ultimately reflects the relational, triune God who created us (Genesis 2).

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FULFILLING THE CALL

- **God calls us to make disciples.**
- **Churches need a strategy to make disciples.**
 - What do you want people to become?
 - What do you want people to do?
 - Where do you want people to go?
- *Sample message communicating clear model:*
 - God created you to live in the context of community with other Jesus followers. The best place for a growing life over time is within intentional relationships. Like many church leaders, we feel that the best place for encouraging intentional relationships over the long term is in a small group.

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ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS

- **Clear Wins**
 - How is our discipleship strategy helping us accomplish our mission?
Leaders won't win if they can't define a win.
- **Group Connections**
 - How are we forming groups? *Think steps, not programs.*
- **Point Leadership**
 - Who are we empowering to take responsibility for our group system?
First who..., then what.
- **Leader Enlistment**
 - *How will we find leaders?*
- **Leader Development**
 - *How can we equip leaders?*

GOAL: To create a contextualized discipleship strategy that helps you accomplish your church's vision and mission.

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GUIDING THEMES: SPIRITUAL GROWTH

- God is relational and lives in community. He has created us for community with him and other people.
- Spiritual growth is not a linear exercise but a lifelong process of becoming conformed to the likeness of Jesus.
- Spiritual growth is both vertical and horizontal - growing faith in and love for God expressed through growing love for people.
- God's Spirit is the one who changes lives. We create opportunity for him to work through the environments we create.
- God has called every person to himself on purpose and for a purpose.

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GUIDING THEMES: GROUP STRATEGY

- Small groups should be a key part of your organizational strategy to help people meaningfully connect and grow.
- Everyone, regardless of where a person is on his or her spiritual journey, should have a place to connect, because people won't grow spiritually unless they are connected relationally.
- The spiritually curious and new to faith (target: unchurched or de-churched) should have a mentoring environment to explore and start their spiritual journeys.
- Groups should be large enough to have an effective core and small enough for people to be noticed when they miss (6-14 people).
- Groups need to meet often enough for relational trust to be built and long enough for spiritual growth to be encouraged and recognized.

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- Closed groups are an important part of creating a predictable, safe, and meaningful group experience.
- Our responsibility is to equip leaders to create safe and predictable small groups where participants pursue authentic community and spiritual growth.
- While embodied community may be preferred, we should leverage digital options to create on-ramps into group life and additional connection opportunities.
- The takeoff (first 90 days of a group) and the landing (last 30 days) are the most critical for the success of the group and for community to become a way of life for participants.

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GUIDING THEMES: LEADER ENLISTMENT

- Group leaders should be growing followers of Jesus because "you can't share what you don't possess."
- Prior to leading, every person needs to fill out an application complete with references and be interviewed.
- A lead pastor making a personal plea for leaders is one of the most effective ways to find new leaders.
- Identifying prospective leaders through current leader recommendations can also be an effective tool for finding new leaders.

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GUIDING THEMES: LEADER DEVELOPMENT

- Adults learn on a need-to-know basis, so it's important to provide flexible and accessible leader resources for just-in-time learning.
- New leaders need our greatest investments and most frequent check-ins to launch, fly, and land their groups well.
- All leaders need to be regularly inspired and equipped in their role as group leaders.
- All leaders need regular resourcing around both practical skills and the spiritual life.
- Often the most beneficial training environment for leaders is a multileader huddle where they can process with and learn from other leaders.

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GUIDING THEMES: GROUP CONNECTION

- Some level of connection (a short-term group) is better than no connection.
- Leveraging an online, centralized connection approach is an important and effective way to connect attendees.
- Organic connection is not a reasonable way to get large numbers of people into groups.
- Long-term connection is necessary for relational trust to be built and for spiritual growth to be experienced. Promotional activity should market long-term groups while also providing short-term options.

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WHY GROUPS?

- Groups support an evangelism strategy.
- Groups decentralize church leadership and care.
- Groups enable more people to serve.
- Groups help develop authentic community.
- Groups offer maximum flexibility.
- Groups allow us to be better stewards.
- Groups remove the primary limits to growth. (P. 95-99)

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POPULAR SMALL-GROUP MODELS

Model	Open/Closed	Distinctive	Connection Strategy
Cell	Closed	Sermon Based	Multiplication
Free Market	Open	Affinity / Semester	Contact Leader
Host	Both	Campaigns	Two Friends
Meta	Open	Value Based	Connection Events
Modified Meta	Closed	Season of Life	Online Connection
Missional	Open	Discipleship Based	Connections Team
Semester	Open	Affinity Based	Contact Leader

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BEST PRACTICES 101

Three Phases of a Group Meeting

- **Connect** - Connecting / reconnecting relationally (first 10-15 minutes)
 - Goal: transition from thinking about life to being fully present
 - Ideas: Icebreakers, Check-In (Highs and lows)
- **Learn** - Focus on the purpose of your time together (~ 1 hour)
 - Goal: Grow toward authentic community and help people take responsibility for their own spiritual growth
 - Ideas: Study/discussion, activity, or a video (or combination)
- **Apply** - Participants identify one takeaway from the night and share prayer requests (15-30 minutes)

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GROUP ESSENTIALS

- **Stay Connected / Cultivate Relationships**
 - Volunteer on a service project or take a short-term mission trip together
 - Rotate names and go out with another group member/couple bi-monthly
 - Host a family gathering (i.e., pool party or cookout)
- **Share Ownership**
 - Facilitating the discussion
 - Bringing snacks
 - Organizing an outside social event or service project
- **Provide Care**
 - Coordinating the care of a group member during a difficult time
 - Following up on prayer requests or life events
 - Setting up a meal calendar for new parents or a member who is ill

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HOW GROUPS FIT IN OVERALL STRATEGY

- **Endear Yourself to Your Community**
 - Ensure people know we're here, are happy because we're here, and are better off because we're here.
 - Connect, support, and love people where they are - rather than waiting or expecting them to come to you.
- **Inspire Your Audience**
 - Help people take the next step to follow Jesus - in small groups!
 - Community Groups: Season-of-life groups (couples', men's, women's)
 - Short-Term Mentor Groups: Transitional seasons of life (Just Grad, Just Married, Leader Dev., Starting Point, DivorceCare, GriefShare)
- **Equip Your Core**
 - Help people become active participants who are leading, giving, & inviting.

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FIVE SHIFTS TO CREATE THRIVING GROUPS

Confused	➔	Compelling
Disengaged	➔	Dedicated
Mine	➔	Ours
Trivial	➔	Transformative
Avoidance	➔	Embrace




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CONFUSED ➔ COMPELLING

Energize Your Group by Articulating Your Purpose

- Create and define the purpose of groups.
- Consider an outward-facing purpose, and resist the temptation to make it all about you.
- Establish a group covenant that highlights your purpose and how you will pursue it.



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DISENGAGED → DEDICATED

Set the Stage to Keep People Coming Back

- Gather your group with purpose.
- Cultivate predictable environments.
 - Determine optimal group size; meeting frequency, venue, length.
 - Intentionally structure your time (study, worship, logistics, prayer).
- Maintain momentum and effectiveness.
- Plan ahead to help struggling groups.

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MINE → OURS

Cultivate Commitment through Shared Ownership

- Know and share your own story with your group.
- Invite members to take on leadership roles.
 - Meal planning, childcare, managing logistics, planning service / ministry, facilitating discussion.
- Connect with group members outside of group gatherings.
 - (Plan for the other 166.5 hours per week).

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TRIVIAL → TRANSFORMATIVE

Stimulate Meaningful Discussions

- Prep for each gathering with prayer and plan the discussion.
- Set and model expectations for engagement.
- Identify common question pitfalls.
- Introduce questions that take the group a bit deeper.
- Redesign your group interactions - switch things up!

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AVOIDANCE → EMBRACE

Engage Difficult Conversations without Destroying Your Group

- Study peacemaking passages as a group, and discuss perceived approaches to future conflict.
- Set boundaries and expectations for ways to leverage tension well.
- Familiarize yourself with strategies for managing conflict and challenging people.

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DISCIPLESHIP MINISTRIES AT ZCCN

- **Pre-COVID:**
 - ~30% of average MW attendance participated weekly in 9:00AM Sunday School classes.
 - Very similar attendance in Wednesday evening Bible studies (often many of the same who attended SS).
- **Present:**
 - ~80% of average MW attendance participate weekly in Small Groups!

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THE POWER OF COMMUNITY

- What might be missing in your life may be the power of community when iron sharpens iron, and together you strengthen, love, convict, correct, and encourage each other.
 - You can't do it alone - and you weren't meant to!
- *How can your church re-imagine discipleship to better connect people to people and to connect people to Jesus Christ?*

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Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us - to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever!

Amen. Ephesians 3:20-21

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HOME GROUPS
Join One Today!

LIFEGROUPS
WE ARE BETTER TOGETHER

community groups
there's a place for you | join one today

Small Groups
FIND YOUR COMMUNITY

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