



PURSUING BIBLICAL COMMUNITY

Hebrews 10:24-25

“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another — and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”



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Study 1: True Fellowship

ICE BREAKER

Take a moment to reflect on the community groups or Bible studies you have been a part of. What is one aspect that was truly impactful for you? Share in a couple sentences what that was.

OPENING PRAYER

INTRODUCING OUR TOPIC *(invite 2 people to each read a paragraph)*

After Jesus ascended to heaven (Acts 1:9-11) about 120 of his followers gathered together for prayer. Their first task was to select a 12th apostle, Matthias, to replace Judas Iscariot. Shortly thereafter, on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit descended upon them with tongues of fire and they began to speak in other languages, the languages of the many ethnicities present in the crowd of people attracted to the miraculous presence of God. The apostle Peter brought clarity to the phenomenon by Biblically explaining the news of salvation. He said,

“Repent, and each one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children, and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord will call to Himself.” (Acts 2:38-39 NASB).

About 3000 people responded to Peter’s message. The Church was born. Everyone began *“continually devoting themselves to the apostle’s teaching, and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.” (Acts 2:42).*

So what is Biblical fellowship? Our English term fellowship comes from the Greek word *koinonia* which connotes an intimate community who share a common belief that God the Father, through Jesus Christ the Son, by and in the Holy Spirit welcomes

humankind into His family by grace. When we acknowledge the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, and confess His lordship over our lives, we become family, not just with God, but with each other.

OPENING OUR BIBLES

1. Everyone turns to passage and have one person read it out loud
2. Pause for a moment and allow people to quietly reflect on the passage
3. Ask the question/s in the text box after reading all 3 passages

Section 1: Source of fellowship

Let's see what we learn about the source of fellowship from these passages?

I John 1:1-4

I Corinthians 1:9

Colossians 1:18-20

What do we learn about the source of fellowship from these passages?

How would we summarize what we have learned in one sentence? (What's the bottom line)

Section 2: Foundational expressions

In the Book of Acts we see the foundational expressions of Christian fellowship. What do you observe in each passage?

Acts 2:42-47

Acts 6:1-7

Acts 13:1-3

Section 3: Sharing in common

Galatians 6:1-5

I Thessalonians 2:5-8

James 5:13-16

A related idea of koinonia is “sharing in common”. What and how are we to share in common?

How would we summarize what we have learned in one sentence? (What’s the bottom line)

APPLICATION

If you have time constraints, consider skipping the questions with an asterisk.

As we reflect on this idea of Biblical fellowship, what is our assessment of where we are at as a Community Group? As a Church?

(Of course, there is always room for improvement, but be sure to be constructive)

What fears or inhibitions might exist?

Are there spiritual wounds we or others may have received that need to be healed?*

(optional, especially for newer groups)

"Are there needs around us in the community of believers that we can meet together?*

Is there one thing we as a community group would like to put into practice?

ENHANCEMENT

On our NCC website <https://www.newtoncovenant.org/pbc> you will find an excellent article to read on the topic of True Fellowship as well as two helpful tools. To get the most out of this study we really want to encourage you to access these. They are short yet poignant. (If we can commit as a group to doing this between now and when we next meet, we can engage together on what we learned.)

CLOSING PRAYER

There are blank pages at the back of your study to jot down prayer requests. It would be wonderful to commit to praying throughout the week, checking in on someone you prayed for and to refer back to this list from time to time to rejoice in answered prayer.

- ❖ If you have time share prayer requests
- ❖ If you are limited in time, break into smaller clusters for prayer
- ❖ If you are very short on time, one person to close in prayer

Please try to ask for prayer for yourself or someone close to you. It's easy to evade our own needs by asking for distant prayer needs but that really does not build true community. Prayer is how we care for one another and lift one another's joys and burdens before the Lord.



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Study 2: The Church: Worship & Mission

ICE BREAKER

We are going to have a little fun this week. Think of a song that might describe you. Bonus points if you can sing it (if you need some ideas look at appendix 1). Alternatively, what was your favorite music group when you were in high school?

OPENING PRAYER

LOOPING BACK

(If you committed as a group to access the articles and tools.)

How were the articles and tools you accessed on your own beneficial to your understanding of True Fellowship? Is there anything in particular you have changed as a result of them?

INTRODUCING OUR TOPIC *(invite 1 person to read and then discuss very briefly)*

Throughout Biblical history believers have gathered to:

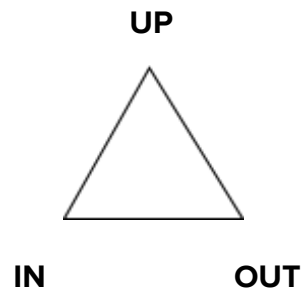
1. worship the God of creation and salvation;
2. build up the body; and
3. bear witness of God's reality to an unbelieving world.

In the Old Testament God commanded His people to invite the nations to experience His revealed glory. Israel was to be the epicenter of worship for the entire world. Psalm 105 commands believers to engage in worship and mission by singing to God and by declaring His wonderful acts to both believers and nonbelievers alike.

In the New Testament, we see Peter commissioning the Gentile Church, “*You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.*” (I Peter 2:9).

In the Old Testament people came to the center of worship at Mt. Zion (i.e. Jerusalem), but in the New Testament we come to the heavenly Zion through our great and eternal high priest, Jesus Christ (Hebrews 12:22-24).

One simple model of this is the UP-IN-OUT triangle.¹ As a body of believers we relate UP to God in worship, praise, prayer, and hearing His voice, we relate IN to one another as interdependent members of His body, and we relate OUT to the world in word and deed to touch peoples’ lives with the kingdom of God. All three must be present.



Question: What do you think of this model?

OPENING OUR BIBLES

1. Everyone turns to the passage and have one person read it out loud
2. Pause for a moment and allow people to quietly reflect on the passage
3. Ask the question/s in the text box after reading all passages in the section.
4. Passages with an asterisk are optional depending on timing (consider doing these on your own if they are not covered during your group time)

¹ From Mike Breen and Steve Cockram’s book, Building a Discipleship Culture.

Section 1: Our mission

What do we observe about worship from the following Old Testament passages?

Exodus 20:1-11

Psalm 96

Zechariah 8:1-8 & 20-23 (*optional)

1 Kings 8:12-21 & 54-66 (*optional)

How does worship relate to mission, i.e., the advance of the gospel among the nations?

How would we summarize what we have learned in one sentence? (What's the bottom line)

Section 2: Our mission expanded

What do we observe about worship from the following New Testament passages?

John 4:16-26

Romans 12:1-2

Revelation 7:9-12

I Corinthians 11:17-26 (*optional)

Matthew 28:16-20 (*optional)

Luke 24:50-53 (*optional)

How does worship relate to the Church's expansion into the nations?

How would we summarize what we have learned in one sentence? (What's the bottom line)

APPLICATION

How do you regard your view of worship - either private or corporate worship?

How do you see the style of worship at NCC serving the mission of the church, both to build up the body of Christ and to welcome those outside the body?

Are there subtle changes we could suggest or implement?*

ENHANCEMENT

On our NCC website <https://www.newtoncovenant.org/pbc> you will find an excellent tool by Adele Calhoun “*A practical guide to worship*” with some excellent reflection questions and spiritual exercises. To get the most out of this study we really want to encourage you to access these. (If we can commit as a group to doing this between now and when we next meet, we can engage together on what we learned and how it’s impacted us.)

It’s also possible for you to engage with just one other person either in your group or a friend.

CLOSING PRAYER

There are blank pages at the back of your study to jot down prayer requests. It would be wonderful to commit to praying throughout the week, checking in on someone you prayed for and to refer back to this list to rejoice in answered prayer.

- ❖ If you have time share prayer requests
- ❖ If you are limited in time, break into smaller clusters for prayer
- ❖ If you are very short on time, one person to close in prayer

Please try to ask for prayer for yourself or someone close to you. It’s easy to evade our own needs by asking for distant prayer needs but that really does not build true community. Prayer is how we care for one another and lift one another’s joys and burdens before the Lord.



PURSUING BIBLICAL COMMUNITY

Study 3: Hospitality & Generosity

ICE BREAKER

What biography have you read, or person's life story have you heard, that made an impact on you?

(Be sure to just share in a couple lines how this was impactful :-)

OPENING PRAYER

LOOPING BACK

(If you committed as a group to access the articles and tools.)

How were the articles and tools you accessed on your own beneficial to your understanding of last week's discussion on worship and mission? Is there anything in particular you desire to change as a result?

INTRODUCING OUR TOPIC *(invite 1 person to read and then discuss very briefly)*

Of the many characteristics of God, two to consider as we think about Biblical Community are hospitality and generosity. God is immensely full of both. God welcomes us to His family (John 1:12), He invites us to a banquet (Isaiah 25:6) and He prepares an eternal lodging for us (John 14:1-3). No one could be more generous than God. He, who has limitless riches, gave his only Son that we would not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16).

We see the practices of both extending all the way back to Genesis, especially among the vulnerable and to strangers. Hospitality included more than meals. It became central to the very identity of what it meant to be the People of God. "Treat the foreigner the same as the native. Love him like one of your own. Remember that you

were once foreigners in Egypt. I am the LORD your God.” (Lev. 19:34, MSG). In the New Testament, we see Jesus practicing and teaching both. In Luke 9 Jesus sends out the twelve without provisions and bids them to rely on the hospitality and generosity of others. And in the New Testament, the Greek word for hospitality is philoxenia - “the love of strangers” (the opposite of xenophobia).

As His followers, we can be both providers and recipients of the hospitality and generosity of God.

OPENING OUR BIBLES

1. Everyone turns to passage and have one person read it out loud
2. Pause for a moment and allow people to quietly reflect on the passage
3. Ask the question/s in the text box after reading all passages
4. Passages with an asterisk are optional depending on timing

Section 1:

Genesis 18:1-8

Matthew 25:31-40

Nehemiah 5:14-19 (*optional)

What do we observe about hospitality from the following passages?

Section 2: Assign 5 people to each read a passage

(for the sake of time they can be read consecutively without everyone turning to each passage)

Luke 10:38-42

Luke 14:12-14

Romans 12:13, 20

Hebrews 13:1-2

1 Peter 4:9-10

How do these passages enhance your understanding of biblical hospitality?

APPLICATION

Reflecting on both Hospitality & Generosity from our study today, what is your one take home for you personally? How might you put that into practice even this week. Consider a tangible measurable action, “this week I will

(Be sure to check in with one another next time you meet to see how that went, or even check in with one another via text during the week. Accountability is a wonderful motivator for us to do what we set out to do in life.)

Also see a helpful assessment under enhancement for this week!

CLOSING PRAYER

There are blank pages at the back of your study to jot down prayer requests.

- ❖ Take a moment to look over past requests shared and consider how God has answered some of them. Take time together to thank God for these answered prayers and continue to pray for areas that are still prayer needs.
- ❖ If you have time share prayer requests
- ❖ If you are limited in time, break into smaller clusters for prayer
- ❖ If you are very short on time, one person to close in prayer

ENHANCEMENT

At the end of this week’s study you will find some personal reflection questions. Take some time today or during your next time alone with God and assess how you are doing in the areas of hospitality and generosity. Engage with God and invite Him into the process.

Also, on our NCC website <https://www.newtoncovenant.org/pbc> under this week's topic you will also find an excellent article entitled “Making A Place for Hospitality” by Christine Pohl. We encourage you to read it. You will also find some tools for further study and some excellent principles to consider as you think of hospitality and what that looks like. Let’s be willing to be stretched in these areas of our lives!

PERSONAL REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Reflect on Hospitality & Generosity and take some time to do a basic assessment using the following questions as a guide:

1. Do I consider myself to be a hospitable person? Why or why not?
2. Do I consider myself to be a generous person? Why or why not?
3. Do other people consider me to be hospitable or generous?
4. Using the 10% tithe guideline, do I give generously of my time, possessions or money? Why or why not?
5. Are there practical steps I can take to live more hospitably and give generously? Are there some steps we could take together as a Community Group? (consider bringing these ideas back to your group next time you meet)



PURSUING BIBLICAL COMMUNITY

Study 4: Encouragement, Correction & Reproof

ICE BREAKER

Who was your favorite family member when you were growing up, and why?

OPENING PRAYER

LOOPING BACK

(If you committed as a group to access the articles and tools.)

How were the articles and tools you accessed on your own beneficial to your understanding of hospitality and generosity? Is there anything in particular you have changed as a result of them?

INTRODUCING OUR TOPIC *(invite 1 person to read and then discuss very briefly)*

Although this study is entitled ***Encouragement, Correction and Reproof***, it could just as easily be entitled ***Friendship***, because an important identity to embrace as a disciple of Jesus is FRIEND - an identity which forces us to ask ourselves, do I want to be a friend like Christ? Jesus said, "No longer do I call you slaves...but I have called you friends." (John 15:15). We see Jesus loving, encouraging, ministering, eating and drinking with his friends, and, if necessary, correcting and reproofing them.

Biblical community fosters deep friendships, where friends encourage, correct, and, sometimes, reprove one another with humility and grace. This implies that people are close enough that they have the intimacy, maturity, and discernment to speak into one another's lives. The purpose of this friendship is to build up and not to tear down. It is to help everyone grow into the likeness of Christ Himself (Gal. 4:19).

OPENING OUR BIBLES

1. Everyone turns to passage and have one person read it out loud
2. Pause for a moment and allow people to quietly reflect on the passage
3. Ask the question/s in the text box after reading all passages
4. Passages with an asterisk are optional depending on timing

Section 1: Encouragement

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

I Thessalonians 5:11-14

Hebrews 10:24-25

Acts 4:36; 11:22-26; 13:1-3; 15:36-41 (*optional)

Proverbs 18:24; 27:17 (*optional)

Romans 15:4-7 (*optional)

What do we learn about Encouragement from the following passages?

Are there ways you have experienced these in your own life?

Section 2: Correction and reproof

II Samuel 12:7-15a

Proverbs 9:7-9

Galatians 6:1-2

2 Timothy 2:22-26; 3:16-17 (*optional)

The idea of correcting or reproofing others may make us uncomfortable. "Who am I to judge?" is the common adage. What do the following passages teach us about Correction and Reproof? How do these passages help us?

APPLICATION

1. Do you routinely seek to offer words of affirmation and encouragement to people you are close to and build them up as followers of Christ? (it's good to be reflective and honest here)
2. How do we encourage one another in our Community Group? (take time to affirm how this is happening. If someone has a word of encouragement to share with the group how this has taken place lately in your group please share)
3. Spend time as a group brainstorming some practical ways to be an encourager? (make a point of adopting at least one idea someone else mentions)
4. Do we trust each other enough to allow for rebuke or correction when needed?

ENHANCEMENT

On our NCC website <https://www.newtoncovenant.org/pbc> you will find an excellent article by well-known author Larry Crabb on The Power of a Well Timed Word. We encourage you to read it. There is also a great handout on Spiritual Friendship.

CLOSING PRAYER

Start your time of prayer in quiet. Ask God to speak to each member in your group as you ask the question:

Is there someone who comes to mind that you would like to encourage this week?

After a few minutes open up for group “popcorn” prayer, encouraging members of your group to a time of praise, thanking God for this 4-part study and the ways it has been impactful.

*Popcorn prayer is where each person just prays a short phrase. In this case, a phrase of praise. It goes back and forth among members in the group and each person

probably prays 2-4 times. The leader will close off the time after the “popcorns” stop popping.

We trust this has been a wonderful 4 part study. Please don't hesitate to reach out to your leader or a member of our pastoral staff if you would like support in any of the 4 areas we studied or are interested in a more intentional discipleship journey.



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APPENDIX

1. Practically Perfect - Mary Poppins Musical
2. Bridge Over Troubled Water - Simon & Garfunkel
I Can Help - Elvis Presley
3. You're So Vain - Carly Simon
4. Brass In Pocket - Pretenders
Let It Matter - Johnnyswim
Don't Try to Make Me Feel Better - Luke Edgemon
5. I AM A ROCK - Simon & Garfunkel
6. The Closer I Am to Fine - Indigo Girls
It's the End of the World as We Know It - REM
7. Always Look on the Bright Side of Life - Eric Idle
Don't Stop Thinking About Tomorrow - Fleetwood Mac
8. We Are the Champions - Queen
If I Had a Hammer - Pete Seeger & Lee Hays

9. The Dock of Bay - Otis Redding
- The Lazy Song - Bruno Mars
- On Common Ground - Rhythm Corps
- Peace of Mind - Van Morrison

For those curious about the number allocation, these songs are part of course notes on the Enneagram provided by Doug and Adele Calhoun. If you know your Enneagram number perhaps it will resonate with you 😊



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PRAYER REQUESTS
