



WHAT DO WE MEAN BY MINISTRY, MISSION, AND MERCY?

Being a Community Group Leader at Two Cities Church, you have likely heard the following words grouped together: *ministry*, *mission*, and *mercy*. But what do we specifically mean by each of these words? After all, they do sound similar at first, and the church often uses them interchangeably. In this brief document, we hope to clarify for you Two Cities Church's definition and vision for each of the three expressions of our Community Groups.

THREE EXPRESSIONS OF COMMUNITY GROUPS

We understand the expressions of community based on the life of Jesus Christ. When we look to Jesus, we see three foundational expressions lived out during his time on earth. These three expressions of Christ's life were *ministry*, *mission*, and *mercy*. Therefore, we understand our calling as a church to be imitating the three expressions of Christ, and our Community Groups are the primary vehicle for these to be expressed.

Each of these expressions is indescribably valuable, and each must be present for our church and Community Groups to be their most effective. Unfortunately, because of our culture and context, the meanings and purposes of these expressions can often seem muddy and unclear. To help bring clarity and simplicity to the expressions, we offer the following framework:



MINISTRY

Bringing **health** to the **local** church through **good rhythms**.



MISSION

Bringing **hope** to the **lost** through **good news**.



MERCY

Bringing **help** to the **least** through **good deeds**.

This is the simplest way in which we understand ministry, mission, and mercy. As you can see, the goal of each of the three expressions differ from one another. Each expression fulfills a specific longing and desire that God has for his church and for all people.

Though they are distinct, when each expression is lived out to the fullest, they combine to display the character and life of Jesus Christ, which is what Two Cities Church longs to do. Because each expression is an invitation and calling that God has given to his church, our Community Groups must fight with conviction and imagination to hold all expressions together in tension and find ways to live out each in the context of community.

Let's look at each of these three expressions one at a time.



MINISTRY

Ministry is strengthening the health of the local church through regular rhythms of spiritual discipline with one another.

The ministry of Two Cities Church is focused on bringing health to the local church. Two Cities Church aims to practice ministry primarily by opening our Bibles and opening our lives together. We want to be like Jesus and disciple others, be with others in community, and care for others. These are the three expressions of ministry that we believe Jesus modeled regularly: discipleship, community, and care.

Discipleship entails the intentional building up of other Christians so that they may build up faithful Christians as well. Community allows us to show the highly relational character of God with one another. Care happens when we bring our arms around others into Christ's peace.



DISCIPLESHIP

Intentionally equipping believers to replicate faithful **followers** of Jesus.



COMMUNITY

Living in **relationships** with both God and others in ways that reflect our relational God.



CARE

Walking with other believers through their unique **sins and struggles** in order to be conformed to the image of Christ.

When we talk about ministry, it is a unique expression of the church compared to mission or mercy. Ministry focuses primarily on bringing health to the local church. Mission focuses on bringing hope to the lost. Mercy focuses on helping the least.



MISSION

Mission is the hope of the good news of Christ proclaimed to the lost locally, nationally, and globally.

Mission was evident in the life of Jesus. He was always engaging lost people by proclaiming to them the gospel of the kingdom of God. Furthermore, we see mission extended to the church as Jesus called his followers to “go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation” (Mark 16:15). As Christians, God calls us to be His witnesses and ambassadors in the world.

The mission of Two Cities Church is focused on bringing hope to the lost. In other words, Two Cities Church aims to live on mission by finding ways to share the good news of Jesus with the lost. We want to be like Jesus and follow his example and command to be his witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and the end of the earth (Acts 1:8). These are the three expressions of mission that we believe Jesus modeled regularly and commanded us to pursue: *local, national, and global*.

Local mission involves us sharing the gospel of Christ to the lost where we live, learn, work, and play. National and global missions entail the same act of bringing the gospel of Christ to the lost, only in areas of the world where we do not have regular spheres of influence.



LOCAL

Spreading the Christ-centered good news to the lost where we **live, learn, work, and play**.



NATIONAL

Spreading the Christ-centered good news to the lost throughout the **United States**.



GLOBAL

Spreading the Christ-centered good news to the lost throughout **all the nations**.

When we talk about mission, it is a unique expression of the church compared to ministry or mercy. Ministry focuses on bringing health to the local church. Mercy focuses on bringing help to the least. But the act of being on mission focuses primarily on bringing hope to the lost.



MERCY

Mercy is helping meet the needs of the least and vulnerable (both believers and unbelievers) with good deeds of Christ.

We see mercy in the life of Jesus as he sees people's felt needs and helps meet those needs. As one who often identified with the least, Jesus often told his disciples if they cared for the least, they cared for him. Thus, followers of Christ are called to show mercy to the least because we want to honor Christ and love him. Just as God has shown us mercy through the death of Christ on our behalf, our calling is to mercifully meet the needs we see all around us, particularly those of the least.

The mercy of Two Cities Church is focused on bringing help to the least. In other words, Two Cities Church wants to practice mercy by finding ways to help meet the needs of the least. Our calling as a church is to live like Jesus Christ. Therefore, we ought to follow his example of practicing mercy to the least around us and throughout the world. These are the three expressions of mercy that we believe Jesus modeled regularly and commanded us to pursue: *receive, relate, and respond*.

Receiving means we welcome everyone into our lives for the sake of knowing others, as well as them knowing us as well. Relating to others requires our effort to establish relationships with the least so they can know our heart's intent to love them. Responding entails taking measures to extend that love to the least by meeting their needs.



RECEIVE

Welcoming all people into all areas of our lives, just as Christ has freely welcomed us, so we might hear their stories and share our stories.



RELATE

Developing personal relationships with the least so we can recognize their needs and they can know they're loved.



RESPOND

Turning our knowledge of and love for the least into **action** by meeting their felt and forever needs.

When we talk about mercy, it is a unique expression of the church compared to ministry or mission. Ministry focuses on bringing health to the local church. Mission focuses on bringing hope to the lost. But the act of practicing mercy focuses primarily on bringing help to the least.