



COMMUNITY GROUP LIFE STAGES¹

STAGE 1

CG IN INFANCY: "THIS IS ALL NEW"

Description

This is a group that has just formed and is brand new.

Temptation

"Let's just do what I did at my old church."

Focus

To build a core within the new CG and establish a healthy CG vision and culture. Grow deep before growing wide.

Expectations and/or Frustrations

- New CG are encouraged to go through the CG Starter Guide and complete a Group Plan together.
- New things mean saying goodbye to old things, which is not always easy.
- There will be three groups of people when trying to enact change (think of a bell curve distribution):
 - i. All-in – These are your potential leaders, excited about the vision. Draw near to these people.
 - ii. Slow adapters – There are people that are open to a new vision, but due to life/energy/busyness they need a little convincing. Spend time celebrating "wins" with these people.
 - iii. Resistant to change – These people don't want to change. The temptation is to win these people over to validate ourselves as leaders. We should love these people, but not lose sleep over convincing them to be all-in with the CG.

Main Objectives

1. Establish the vision and culture
 - a. CG Leaders must set the tone and pace for the CG. If they want vulnerability, they must model vulnerability. If they want to be engaging neighbors, they must be doing the same thing.
 - b. Culture is established and reinforced by the questions we ask, the things we count, and what we celebrate.
2. Establish Group Rhythms
 - a. The group should brainstorm ways to establish meaningful weekly and monthly rhythms. This can be accomplished by walking through the Group Plan.

¹ Adapted from "Predictable Success"

STAGE 2

CG IN CHILDHOOD: "THIS IS FUN"

Description

The group has established a core, a culture, and has bought into the vision and rhythms. People are energized and optimistic about making an impact and growing deeper together.

Temptation

"We can do this by our own strength! And our motivation is _____, not the gospel."

Focus

Focus on staying true to the rhythms established at the end of the previous stage. Groups should begin to grow wide (i.e., reaching those where they live, learn, work, and play.)

Expectations and/or Frustrations

- These CG's are expected to find regular rhythms of Ministry, Mission, and Mercy.
- There will be people who still struggle with transparency in this phase.
- Participation out of normal CG time (i.e., Family meals, Family outings, serving together) will likely become inconsistent as people still struggle to break from the standard view of a Bible study or Sunday School.
- CG should start to feel like a Family.

Main Objectives

1. Maintain CG rhythms
 - a. Cynicism is the result of ditching previously established rhythms.
2. Welcome new people (as space allows)
 - a. Have a strategy for welcoming new guests (how we greet guests from within the church differs from how we greet unbelievers who are visiting.)
3. Create memories
 - a. Plan Family meals, throw birthday parties, take over-night trips together. You want people to say, "remember that time we..."

STAGE 3

CG IN ADOLESCENCE: "THIS IS MESSY"

Description

People begin comfortably opening up about what's really going on in their lives. At the same time newer people are still adjusting.

Temptation

"Let's just do what is easiest."

Focus

CG Leaders need to keep the vision in front of the group and continue to find ways balance all the values of Community Groups (particularly the ones that don't come as easy).

Expectations and/or Frustrations

- Growing pains - organization and communication can become more difficult.
- Conflict – people are no longer on their best behavior.
- Apprentices – future leaders should already be identified at this point and are being given opportunities to be developed.

Main Objectives

1. Review Group Plan
 - a. This is helpful to get new people caught up to speed on what to expect and it keeps the group accountable to what they committed to do as a group.
2. Identify and Develop Apprentices
 - a. There should be at least one apprentice as this stage that is being poured into.
3. Encourage DNA Groups
 - a. As people begin to grow as disciples and want to go deeper, DNA Groups are a great thing to push people towards. Encourage them to form with people inside the group or with other Christians where they live, learn, work, or play.

STAGE 4

CG IN MATURITY: "THIS IS DOABLE"

Description

Groups have reached maturity and have begun living out the vision. They are seeing people taking next steps in their faith, seeing people reached through the group, and are seeing leaders emerging.

Temptation

"This is awesome. Can't we just stay here?"

Focus

The result of healthy CGs in this phase is to reproduce itself. Conversely, if the CG stays in this phase too long it will become unhealthy and stagnant. Multiplication is not only a good thing, but a necessary thing. (Note: This doesn't minimize the difficulty of saying goodbye to people by sending out leaders.)

Expectations and/or Frustrations

- CGs in this stage are catching their stride. Fruit is being born out of the group. Things feel steady.
- As a result of things going well, the idea of change and sending out leaders to start a new group will undoubtedly be met with resistance.

Main Objectives

1. Reinforce why multiplication is a value
 - a. This won't be the first time you talk about multiplication (you should have addressed this very early on in your Group Plan!), but it becomes harder to talk about when you sense resistance in the room.
2. Follow the Multiplication Guide and set a date for when new leaders (and probably a small core who go with them) will be sent out
 - a. See the CG Resource page for the Multiplication Guide. This will walk the group through the vision and help you plan for sending people out well.
3. Fight vision drift
 - a. When things are going well, vision becomes assumed if it is not continually reiterated. When vision is assumed, it becomes quickly forgotten.

STAGE 5

CG ON THE TREADMILL: "THIS IS GROWING STALE"

Description

When groups have met together for a long period of time and not seen much growth or fruit, things begin to feel stale. CG becomes routine and it's no longer the night of the week you most look forward to. It becomes a place where people are no longer challenged or pushed.

Temptation

"Things will fix themselves."

Focus

To drastically change the CG culture and evaluate if the group is able to move in a healthy direction.

Expectations and/or Frustrations

- Some combination of unhealthy culture:
 - Inconsistent participation
 - No apprentices
 - Cliquish. Not warm to all or visitors.
 - No vision for multiplication.
 - Not living out Mission – not praying for the lost or finding ways for the group to engage with people far from God.
 - Not living out Mercy – apathy towards finding ways to serve or meet the needs of others.
 - Apathy towards discipleship, community, and care.
 - Sin is tolerated or celebrated.
 - CG Leaders are experiencing burnout.

Main Objectives

1. Involve the coach
 - a. Coaches should be aware of the unhealthy CG culture. CG Leaders should be receptive to the guidance of the coach or CG Ministry staff.
2. Change things up
 - a. Try out some different things as a group. Consider opening the group up again to new people. Infusing new people provides an opportunity to shift the culture. But you must be sure it's the new people that help affect the group's culture, not the other way around.
3. Return to Phase 1
 - a. Take the CG through the Starter Guide and complete a fresh Group Plan. Explain that you want to bring the vision of the CG in line with Two Cities' CG vision. Pray that the group would buy in. Tap key people in the group to help own this new culture.

STAGE 6

CG ON LIFE SUPPORT: "THIS SHOULD END"

Description

This group has reached the end of its life cycle. This could be due to an unhealthy CG culture, a large percentage of the CG is moving away, or leaders moving on with no viable replacements.

Temptation

- "Let's keep meeting for the sake of meeting."
- "Disbanding this group means I am a failure."

Focus

The leader needs to be comforted that ending a group is not the same as their leadership failing. On this side of the grave everything has an expiration date. The CG Leader should stay positive and help find new CG's for each of the current CG members. It's also helpful for coaches to make observations about why the CG is ending – what lessons can be gleaned to prevent this in the future?

Expectations and/or Frustrations

- People may feel sad that this group is coming to an end.
- People may feel cynical about their experience with community.
- People may fall through the cracks or use this as an opportunity to drift away from the church.

Main Objectives

1. Connect each CG attender to a new CG.
 - a. Make sure nobody falls through the cracks. The worst thing that could happen is for everyone to never get plugged back in. A great option is to end the group around the time of a Group Connect (New Year, Easter, Fall Launch) and encourage everyone in the group to attend together.
2. Set the final CG meeting date.
 - a. Determine a month or two ahead of time the last time your CG will meet. As previously stated, try to align this with an upcoming Group Connect.
3. Have a final CG celebration
 - a. Go out to dinner or have a feast to celebrate the things the Lord did through the group. There needs to be a final meeting to bring closure.