

Growth Groups Vision Document

Describing Growth Groups

At Peace Church, Growth Groups are the ground zero for discipleship. Within these communities, individuals and couples establish the patterns of life that lead us into a deeper relationship with God, his Church and his Mission in the world. The Word of God that is preached on Sundays and communicated through all our programming is integrated into our everyday lives. Along the way, we become more and more conformed to the image of Jesus Christ.

The Need

The Christian life was never meant to be static. Our salvation should define how we live here and now, not just where we go when we die. Scripture describes the journey of salvation as being “conformed” to the image of Jesus Christ. Jesus called this process “discipleship.” Therefore, our church’s mission is to make disciples. Growth Groups are essential to that mission. Why?

- Because Growth Groups allow the time and space for the Word Preached to become the Word Lived out.
- Because disciples can only be formed in the context of accountable relationships.
- Because Growth Groups allow people to move from being consumers to being creative contributors in the spiritual growth of fellow Christians.
- Because the Spirit-filled life of the Kingdom is best experienced in the context of authentic, face-to-face relationships.

At Peace Church, Kingdom community will only happen if we do it on purpose. In the last few years, we have moved from being a small, to medium, to large-sized church. We are well on our way to becoming a very large church. As our family grows, we want to insure that disciples are formed in the context of caring, missional community. That will happen through our Growth Groups.

The Nature

Growth Groups center on applying Scripture, self-defined accountability, growth in prayer, care, service and mission. We believe that the life of a true disciple should be defined and lived out within the Growth Group. These groups should become a community that works together to foster personal growth and active engagement in our church family and local community. By pooling energy, time and resources, these groups should be a place where people experience what Kingdom life is all about. In short, a Growth Group is where the things we read about in the Bible are lived out in our everyday lives.

Growth Groups happen when a group of people are brought together with the leadership of someone equipped by our Peace Church pastors. They often begin as a group of acquaintances (or sometimes even strangers) and are called to become an

authentic community. This happens as groups meet at least twice each month, follow a pattern of life together, and seek to establish real relationships that spill outside regular group meetings and into everyday life.

The Potential

Imagine what would happen if Peace Church continues to grow not only as a gathered people on Sunday mornings, but as scattered, small groups of people who are organically living out the Kingdom mission. Imagine each of these groups creatively discerning how the Holy Spirit is calling them to become more like Jesus and fulfill his call on their lives. Imagine what would happen if people not only, for example, hear a sermon series on the Lord's Prayer, but actually practice praying it together. Imagine what might happen if a Growth Groups didn't wait for the church to organize the next serve project, but decided to reach out to our local community together. Imagine a family facing a medical emergency knowing that the meals would be handled, the pets fed, and the mail picked up on time by a group of people they've come to know and trust. Now, imagine these things happening organically, all over the place, through all the Growth Groups of our congregation. Can you catch a glimpse of what might happen?

Defining Growth Groups

GROWTH GROUPS: Spirit-filled, disciple-making small groups where God's Word is lived out in the context of maturing, serving and missional relationships.

- **Growth Groups Focus UP:** How can we bring the Lord glory and honor together as we listen to His Word, hear the voice of His Holy Spirit and seek to live obediently? How can we lift up our prayers before him (adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication)?
- **Growth Groups Focus IN:** What is God trying to do in *my* life through the Word? What is God saying to *our* group? How can we help each other grow in self-identified areas of accountability? How can we serve each other and support each other in our real-world need? How can our group grow in our prayer life together and in greater transparency in our efforts to become conformed to Christ?
- **Growth Groups Focus OUT:** How can we serve together in our church? How can we engage our greater community for the Gospel? How can our group foster multiplication by raising up leaders for new growth groups? Where is there a need that our group can meet together, for God's glory? Who are the people we are praying will come to embrace the Gospel? What is my outreach temperature?

GROWTH GROUP PRACTICES: The essential activities we use to foster a healthy growth groups

- **Regular Gatherings:** Growth Groups will gather together *at least* twice each month. For these groups to become truly functioning discipleship communities, these gatherings will serve as the baseline for community. Other places and times for gathering, sharing and interaction should become the norm.
- **Application-focused Bible study:** How is God's Word bringing change to our lives? What new commitments are we being called to make? Are we growing in our ability to discern the voice of the Holy Spirit as we apply Scripture?
- **Prayer and Sharing in loving, accountable relationships:** How can we deepen our conversation with God *together*? What are the needs in our lives that we need to pray about? How do we want our group to give us support and accountability in specific areas of growth as disciples? How can we help each other become disciple-makers?
- **Mutual care and support:** How can we come alongside each other in times of need? Can we move beyond simply talking about a study to actually sharing life? Can we exhibit a care for each other that looks like Acts 2:44-46? When one of us struggles, how can the rest of us pool our resources to help and/or connect them to resources within our greater church family.
- **Acts of service:** How can our group serve within our greater Peace Church family together? How can we actively search out ways for our group to have a positive impact on the ministries of our congregation? How can we respond to a need within our church family?
- **Missional outreach:** How can our group focus outward? How can we, at least two times each year, be part of strategic, intentional interaction with people who need to hear the Gospel and see it in action? How can we take concrete steps to reach out to the lost and hurting in our community?

GROWTH GROUP LEADERS: Called to cultivate healthy Growth Groups

- Communicate and guard the group focus and mission
- Regularly confirm that Growth Group Practices are being followed by the group
- Reach out to group members between meetings, exhibiting the heart of a shepherd
- Lead group to envision pathways for service and mission
- Continuously seek to grow and mature as a leader
- Identify, recruit, and assist in empowering potential growth group leaders

GROWTH GROUP COACHING TEAM: Called to provide support and accountability to Growth Group Leaders

- Regularly pray for a specified list of Growth Group Leaders
- Help Growth Group Leaders acquire study materials and recruit new members.
- Provide counsel and advice in handling different aspects of group dynamics.

- Gather quarterly to review how groups leaders are doing.

PASTORS: Called to provide vision and practical training to all Growth Group Leaders and to oversee staff who organize the Growth Group ministry

- Peace Church pastors will be responsible for defining vision and providing tools so that Growth Group Coaches and Leaders can foster a network of thriving Growth Groups
- Peace Church pastors will oversee the staff who provide organization and operational support to Growth Groups by recruiting, promoting, training and forming Growth Groups