

# THE PURPOSE OF BIBLE STUDY GROUPS



Why do we have Bible Study Groups at Liberti Church? Before we can answer that, let's back it up and answer the question: what's the big-picture vision of our church? Why do we exist? The answer is this:

***Liberti Church seeks to live, speak, and serve as the very presence of Jesus for the Harrisburg region, that together, we might enjoy the freedom of the gospel.***

How do we seek that? By pursuing a lifestyle of worship, community, and mercy. Through His finished work, Jesus sets us free to love God (worship), love each other (community), and love our neighbor (mercy).

So the purpose of everything we do at Liberti Church - gathered worship services, serving opportunities, family ministries, etc. - is to facilitate and further this pursuit of a lifestyle of worship, community, and mercy. How that looks in a particular ministry, venue, or opportunity will differ. The specific way that plays out in Bible Study Groups looks something like this.

## **1. Bible Study Groups Exist for Worship.** (Communion with Christ)

Bible Study Groups help the people of our church pursue **Communion with Christ**. We read and discuss scripture and spend time praying to and praising God. The smaller size and environment lends itself to interaction, honesty, and application in a way that our gathered worship services do not.

Through our study and discussions, through our prayers and praises, we invite and encourage each other to understand the Bible and apply its truth through our prayers and praises. And rather than a merely academic or intellectual pursuit, we share our lives and our own stories about how Jesus has transformed and is transforming us. We want to grow not only in knowledge, but in love for God, His Word, and His Church.

## **2. Bible Study Groups Exist for Community.** (Connection and Care)

Bible Study Groups are the relational front line of Liberti Church. They provide our primary venue for **Connection** and **Care**.

**Connection.** Bible Study Groups help Liberti Church become not merely a group of people who share a room on Sundays, but people who live out their shared identity in Jesus. In Bible Study Groups, we pursue knowing others and being known *by* others. Connection should move well beyond brief encounters and shallow relationships and involve truly inviting people into our homes and our lives.

**Care.** In response to God's care for us, we care for one another. We encourage one another, pray for one another, and disciple one another. We seek to meet both physical needs (meals, transportation, general help, etc.) and spiritual needs (visiting, praying, encouraging, etc.) Care isn't just for professionals or a special team of people in the church but is an "every member" responsibility.

### **3. Bible Study Groups exist for Mercy.** (Cultivate a Heart of Mission and Service)

Christian community is a means for us to participate in God's redemptive mission. So Bible Study Groups exist to **Cultivate** a heart of mission and service among the people of Liberti Church. Though there might be times a Bible Study Group serves together, more fundamentally, every Bible Study Group should send out its members into their neighborhoods, workplaces, schools and other communities equipped with a desire and readiness to live, speak and serve as the presence of Jesus.

# WHAT IT MEANS TO BE IN A BIBLE STUDY GROUP



Bible Study Groups are a vital expression of our church life - where we grow as disciples in Communion with Christ, connect and care for each other, and seek to cultivate hearts of mission and service in our region. Because of this, we think it's essential (and an excellent idea) for everyone to be in a Bible Study Group.

But let's be clear about something: **we're not looking for perfect people.** Very much the opposite. If your life doesn't entirely model everything on this list, you're in good company! If you're a Christian, we hope you *desire* the traits listed below. If you are exploring Christianity, you are more than welcome to join us in a Bible Study Group, regardless of how much of this list applies to you.

With that in mind, here is who we desire to become as a church community, and what we're asking of those who are part of a Bible Study Group:

## 1. A Bible Study Group Member **Takes Ownership for their Growth in Christ.**

Are you spending time in prayer? In reading the Bible? Do you come to gathered worship? Are you growing in the gospel? We want everyone to take ownership of their growth. Practically speaking, this means:

- Participating in weekly gathered worship and taking the Lord's Supper
- Setting aside regular time for prayer and Bible study
- Committing to being a "regular" in your Bible Study Group

## 2. A Bible Study Group Member is **Authentic and Accountable.**

Being in a Bible Study Group means you're not an independent Christian. You are putting yourself under the care of leaders of our church. Practically speaking, this means:

- Being an active participant in the life of your group. (Responding to communications quickly, assisting leaders in creating an engaging environment. Seeking not only to be served but to serve)
- Being honest with your Bible Study Group about your own spiritual life and health
- Seeking prayer and considering input from others about personal decisions

## 3. A Bible Study Group Member **Loves Others.**

Christians are called to the 50+ "one-anothering" passages in the New Testament: love one another, bear one another's burdens, confess sin to one another, encourage one another, care for one another, etc. We are called to love one another and be a part of one another's growth in grace. Practically speaking, this looks like:

- Praying for the people of your group
- Making time to get to know the people in your group - both inside and outside set group gatherings
- Caring for the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of each other

# BIBLE STUDY GROUP FAQs



Here are a few of the frequently asked questions we receive about Bible Study Groups...

## **How are Bible Study Groups organized?**

We offer men's, women's, and co-ed Bible Study Groups. So the first step would be to prayerfully consider which type of group fits best with your current season of life and needs. (If you're married, be sure to talk this out with your spouse too!) Once you know what kind of group, our church staff will help you find one that works with your schedule. We'll always do the best we can. At the same time, we'd ask that you be as flexible as possible and to prioritize your involvement in a group. If we can't find a group that meets the exact specifications this semester, we'd still love for you to find a way to be in one.

## **How often do Bible Study Groups meet?**

At least twice a month. Some meet weekly, which we also think is great. The groups meet throughout the fall and spring, with a break during the Advent season. And many groups also choose to meet over the summer, though sometimes with a different frequency and with different content (see below).

## **What content will Bible Study Groups use?**

During the fall and spring, all our Bible Study Groups study along with the current sermon series at Liberti Church. Doing so helps us dive more deeply into a particular part of God's Word and seek to wrestle through and live out the implications of the texts we're studying on Sundays. As we've been doing the past couple years, Liberti Church will continue to provide a Bible Study Guide to go along with each series.

In the summer, we invite the leaders of our Bible Study Groups to choose a study or book they believe will be particularly helpful for their group. We have a long list of recommended resources we make available to our leaders. We also welcome their suggestions and ideas.

## **Am I required to be in a Bible Study Group?**

No. But we can't recommend it highly enough. Because Bible Study Groups are the relational front line of Liberti Church, to not be in one could make it significantly more difficult for you to connect with others and to both give and receive care.

## **Can I be in more than one Bible Study Group?**

Yes. We'd just ask you to consider the different opportunities God has placed in your life (both inside and outside Liberti Church) and not overcommit yourself. For some people, being in a gender-specific study AND a co-ed study could be really helpful. Especially in a season where you've got some capacity. But most people should only be in one group. It will help you be that much more committed to and available for the people in that group.

## **I'd like to lead a Bible Study Group. How can I do that?**

Let's talk! Every year, we invite people from Liberti Church who are interested in a variety of leadership roles to participate in a leadership track. After the initial leadership track, we offer some additional, role-specific development and equipping for the men and women who lead Bible Study Groups. If you're interested, get in touch with one of our elders. We'd love to buy you a cup of coffee and lay out the process.

## **I don't feel equipped to care for other people. Where do I start?**

Caring for other people in Jesus' is both an incredible responsibility and incredible privilege. It's normal to feel intimidated or overwhelmed by that. Certainly, each of us has different gifts to care for people in different ways. But all of us are called to pursue care for one another. You can start simply by showing up and being present with other people. You'll be amazed at what your regular presence in another person's life can lead to.

Beyond that, the elders of Liberti Church are committed to equipping Bible Study Group leaders who can help you pursue that in your group. The elders are also committed to helping equip you to care for each other more and more. One place to start is with the additional resources below.

## **What are some additional resources I can explore to help get ready to be part of a Bible Study Group?**

Great question! We have a few places we'd encourage you to start. (We've got these available to send out to us too - just call or email a Liberti Church staff member and we'll send them to you)

- [The "One-Anothers" of the New Testament](#)
- [Pastoral Care in Community](#)
- [Discipleship at Liberti Church](#)

## **What if I want to leave my Bible Study Group?**

You can leave your group at any time. If you do so choose to leave please contact your group leader and they will remove you from the group. Switching groups is also possible. Know that groups do have a capacity limit so you may not be able to get into another group right away. We will do what we can to place you in a group that best fits your requests. If you would like to be removed from the group or switch groups you can also contact a member of our staff team.