

Shepherd's Community Church Soul Care Groups

Purpose

Soul Care groups are designed to provide an environment where Biblical truths are applied and Christians care for one another in response to the Gospel. God's plan laid out in Scripture for the spiritual growth of believers is predicated on community. (Eph. 2:19-22) Within Soul Care groups relationships are built for the purpose of mutual discipleship that allow for the following:

1. Fulfilling the call of Scripture to mutual care within the body (1 Cor. 12:24-16)
2. True Christ-centered fellowship (1 John 1:7)
3. Opportunities to perform the one-anothers of Scripture:
 - Greet one another (Rom. 16:16, 1 Cor. 16:20, 2 Cor. 13:12, 1 Pet. 5:14)
 - Comfort one another (1 Thess. 4:18)
 - Forgive one another (Col. 3:13)
 - Build one another up (Rom. 15:2; 1 Thess. 5:11)
 - Serve one another (Gal. 5:13)
 - Bear one another's burdens (Gal. 6:2)
 - Encourage one another (Heb. 10:25)
 - Meet with one another (Heb. 10:25)
 - Be kind, tenderhearted, and forgiving towards one another (Eph. 4:32, Rom. 12:10)
 - Receive (welcome) one another as Christ received us (Rom. 15:7)
 - Care for one another (1 Cor. 12:25)
 - Minister one to another (1 Pet. 4:10)
 - Show hospitality to one another (1 Pet. 4:9)
 - Pray for one another (James 5:16)
4. Opportunities to use spiritual gifts (Romans 12:6-8)

Description

A Soul Care group is a small group of men and women that are committed to caring for each other. Each group meets for 2+ hours, 3 - 4 times per month. Ideally, meetings will occur in the homes of members. Typical meetings include a time for a Bible-centered study, prayer, and fellowship. Leaders and members will work to foster a grace-filled environment where all can be comfortable in sharing openly. One question per week will be asked of all members with time for each to respond. Optionally, groups may choose to engage in other activities together in addition to regular gatherings including service projects and purely recreational events such as a game night. In order to maintain an environment where relationships flourish, groups that grow larger than 15 members should split and form two groups.

Members

Soul Care members join a group with the goal of developing relationships for the purpose of spiritual maturity. Members do not attend primarily to learn from a good Bible teacher or counsellor, (though we strive for strong Bible teaching and wise counsel) but to care for others in the group and to receive care. Each member should come prepared to participate and share with an honest and transparent attitude. This should include answering the weekly question and sharing at least one personal prayer request. Participation should be thoughtful to the time constraints of the group and allowing opportunity for each member to share. As a group, encouragement and accountability will be provided to pursue the following goals:

- Consistent devotional life
- Application of God's Word to daily life
- Growing relationships with spouse and children (if applicable)
- Growing relationships within the group
- Meaningful service in the church
- Involvement in evangelism

Leaders

Each Soul Care group will be led by a core of 4-6 leaders including couples and singles. This core group will provide the critical mass to start the group and encourage the other leaders. They will share the responsibilities of leading the group including hosting, leadership in study and prayer time (men only), and providing snacks. The qualifications for Soul Care group leaders are membership in Shepherd's Community Church and elder approval. New leaders will be required to attend some training in preparation for leading a group.

Other groups

There are many other types of groups that are certainly spiritually beneficial, such as study groups, accountability groups, Christian book discussion groups, and the like. It could be that some in our church have the time and interest to be involved in more than one small group, which is great! However, many others have only enough time in their lives to be involved in one small group. The leadership of Shepherd's Church has prayerfully determined that Soul Care groups are the priority for the spiritual growth of our body. If someone only has enough time for involvement in and commitment to one group, it should be a Soul Care group.

Elder Oversight

Oversight for the Soul Care ministry will be provided by the elders of Shepherd Community Church. An elder representative will hold quarterly gatherings for all group leaders to provide training and encouragement. Additionally, a study topic will be provided every 6 months for the groups. Alternate study topics may be used with elder approval.