

# TABLE COMMUNITY

## OVERVIEW

### **Missional Discipleship**

Our vision is to see a movement of missional disciples, gathering in rhythms of discipleship and scattering on mission, throughout STL. We define a missional disciple as someone who abides deeply with God (filled with His love) and lives on mission in everyday life (overflowing with His love). A Table Community is a means of spiritual formation for missional disciples.

A Table Community has its origins in the small group of disciples that first gathered around Jesus in the gospels, which then became a discipleship movement after Pentecost. The Spirit gathered the early church in their own homes and scattered them to spread the gospel house to house. From this perspective we can think of a Table Community as having two main characteristics: spiritual family and missional community.

The following is a snapshot of a Table Community gathering:

### **Rhythm of Gathering**

**(1) COMMUNION** – We open every gathering by centering ourselves on Jesus by participating in Communion (Lord’s Supper, Eucharist, etc.). Jesus asked his disciples to remember him – his body broken and blood poured out – in the context, we believe, of a shared meal. (Lk. 22:19-20; Mt. 26:26-30; Mk. 14:22-25; 1 Cor. 11:23-25)

**(2) TABLE CONVERSATION** – The goal of table conversation is to become more consciously aware of God’s presence in all the circumstances and situations of daily life. We do this by asking each other a simple question, “Where have you seen God at work in your life?” We ask this question of each other every week! (Mt. 28:20; Acts 17:2)

**(3) PRAISE AND PRAYER** – After table conversation, we spend time praising God, through song, and praying, often using Scripture as our anchor. The goal is for the entire community, however led, to participate during this time. (Eph. 5:18-20)

**(4) CORE SPIRITUAL PRACTICES** – Then we spend time focusing on one of four spiritual practices. We rotate through the following spiritual practices:

#### ***Soul Sharing***

Goal – The goal of soul sharing is to help us become more like Jesus by practicing his presence in all of life. While our table conversation focuses on our circumstances in daily life, soul sharing focuses on how we’re doing in the

midst of those circumstances. We believe this practice helps us be known and loved by our community.

In Practice – We ask each other a simple lead-in question: “How is it with your soul?” In other words, “How are you really doing?” (Ps. 66:16, 139:23-24) Each person will (1) share one thing; (2) listen/speak into the person who shared; and (3) pray for the person who shared.

### **Scripture**

Goal – The goal of Scripture sharing is for the community to be devoted to and engaged in reading God’s Word on a daily basis. The goal is not just to learn and understand what God once said, but to discern and respond to what God is saying through Scripture (to be clear, we’re not saying God’s Word changes). This practice draws on the ancient practice known as *sacred reading*. (Romans 15:14; 2 Timothy 3:16)

In Practice – We will ask each other, “What has Jesus been saying to you through the Scriptures?” After someone shares, the community will have a discussion around the passage shared. As many people can answer the question as time allows. As time comes to a close, the community may notice a particular theme being discussed. This could invite prayer, an action point, or something to follow up on in the coming week.

### **Spiritual Practices**

Goal – The goal of spiritual practices is for communities to practice the way of Jesus together. Spiritual practices help us cultivate intimacy with Jesus and grow us in his love. Community will help us stay consistent in the various spiritual practices. At the same time, the more we lean into spiritual practices on our own the more we will have to offer the community when we’re gathered. (1 Timothy 4:7-10)

In Practice – This could mean *learning* more about a specific practice (like fasting or Sabbath), *practicing* it on our own throughout the week, and then coming together to *discuss* our experience. It could also look like reading a book together, or listening to a podcast, or watching a teaching on our own, then coming together to discuss what God is has taught us and said to us through the content. Either way, the goal is to actually practice them as a community!

### **Everyday Mission**

Goal – Lastly, the habits and skills we learn through table conversation and the core spiritual practices should overflow in our daily lives. In other words, being gathered as a Table Community should equip us for personal witness as we are

scattered into the world. The goal of everyday mission is to help each other live as everyday missionaries where we live, work, learn, or play. (Luke 10:1; Colossians 4:5-6; Matthew 28:18-20)

In Practice – Practically this could look like helping each other identify our mission field, discern our missional opportunities, and then reflect on our witness in these spaces. This rhythm could also look like engaging in mission as a Table Community to help serve a particular need within our community. We have found that as we live on mission individually we will often discover various needs our wider community can serve and fulfill together.

*\*These four spiritual core practices can vary depending on each community. Table Communities often adapt and get creative with the practices. The goal here was to provide more clarity for the basic way each core spiritual practice might look.*

**(5) SENDING OUT** – We end our gatherings by sending each other out to live as missional disciples. This could be a simple sending prayer or reading and reciting a passage of Scripture the community has chosen together to end their time, like *“May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.”* (2 Cor. 13:14)