

GROWTRACK

SESSION #1: GATHER

WELCOME!!

Thank you all for coming tonight to our very 1st Covenant Church GROWTrack. The fact that you're here means that we didn't run you off at our Meet the Team Luncheon & Orientation.

Tonight, is Sessions 1 & 2 outlining the VISION of Covenant Church, next week will be Sessions 3 & 4.

We are recording tonight so in a few minutes I'm going to do another formal welcome and pray us in and then we'll begin. The video of this class will be edited and made available to folks that can't be present for the class.

We'll have an opportunity for questions related to the topic at the end....if you have a question, raise your hand and one of our team will come to you...please let them hold the mic...and you can ask your question.

START

Welcome to Covenant Church's GROWTrack...these Sessions are designed to help you learn what Covenant Church is all about by learning the VISION that God has given us as a church body...

and that **Vision is to GROW!** Gather Receive Offer Work

So, when I say GROW, I'm not talking about numeric growth of this church body per se, but about growth of the individual, you and me, as we function as members within this church local body.

So, as we go through these sessions, please follow along in the handouts that you've been provided and let's dig in together to God's word.

We have much to cover so let's....Let's pray...

Right beliefs are *critically important*. We are, at times, the victims of our own wrong believing. If you don't think that includes you, let me introduce you to your very first wrong belief! If we simply live based on what **we think** about things and how **we feel** about things...if we are not **submitted to a higher truth** than our own mere life experience, then we are more stuck than we know. We need God's word...the TRUTH....for absolute clarity and understanding, to live in concert with the ways of God and for HIS purposes and for His glory.

Quote: "We must empty ourselves of all that fills us, so that we may be filled with what we are empty of". Augustine

Quote: "That our idea of God corresponds as nearly as possible to the true being of God is of immense importance to us. Compared with our actual thoughts about Him, our creedal statements are of little consequence. Our real idea of God may lie buried under the rubbish of

conventional religious notions and may require an intelligent and vigorous search before it is finally unearthed and exposed for what it is." A.W. Tozer

The vision of Covenant Church is for each and every member to G.R.O.W. and to bear fruit unto God, ultimately living a life that glorifies Him. These GROW Track Sessions are designed to bring this vision into focus.

The “G” in G.R.O.W. stands for “GATHER”.

This is far more than just gathering for a “church service”. It’s a gathering of hearts that have been redeemed by Jesus. Shared lives. Not perfect, but real and authentic. A place where *vulnerability is not shamed but invited*.

- **1st Point to Ponder:** As you commit to “Gather”, you GIVE YOURSELF to TRUE FELLOWSHIP, TO KNOW and BE KNOWN within in context of a redemptive community.
 - **Read: Hebrews 10:23-25 (NASB)**
23 Let’s hold firmly to the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; 24 and let’s consider how to encourage one another in love and good deeds, 25 not abandoning our own meeting together, as is the habit of some people, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

To understand what a Redemptive Community is we have to first look at what it means to be redeemed and what the benefits of redemption are.

- **REDEEM:** the PURCHASE BACK of something that’s BEEN LOST, by the payment of a ransom.
 - Jesus is THE Redeemer! He has ransomed our hearts and provided a way for the restoration of all that our Father God originally intended for us to have.
 - **Redeemed people know they are FORGIVEN and are confident in the overwhelming GOODNESS of God.** (Gratitude and humility grow out of this place)
 - **Redeemed people know they are declared RIGHTEOUS.** (declared morally perfect and in right standing with God, a position in which they have contributed absolutely nothing to attain)
 - **Redeemed people know they have FREEDOM from the law.** (We carry no burden of guilt and sanctification grows out of this place)
 - **Redeemed people know they have been ADOPTED and are a part of something bigger than themselves.** (orphaned hearts are rescued finding true identity, acceptance, and purpose)
 - **Redeemed people know they have eternal LIFE, and they live from an eternal PERSPECTIVE.** (transcendent living)

A word of truth about Redemptive Community...it is messy, and that’s because life is just hard. Think about our lives. Despite our very best efforts to arrange our lives in the most fulfilling, safe, comfortable, and, yes, even predictable ways; the craziness of life still happens. The unexpected. The hardships. The let downs and disappointments. Ultimately each one of us tends to pursue the things in life that we desire: *relationships, careers, adventures, hobbies, etc.*; and then we work feverishly to build a world in which

those things are achievable and sustainable. Then it happens. The inevitable “gut punch” comes that has the potential to change everything.

Examples:

The company we've bled for goes under or simply no longer needs our services.

The person we committed our life to in holy matrimony one day tells us that love just isn't enough anymore and divorce forever alters the landscape of our family.

The church that we love is ripped a part because of the moral failure of a pastor or leader.

The loss of a child or someone so dear to our hearts that the thought of life without them here is more than we can bear.

This is why being embedded in redemptive community is so critical: **WE'RE NOT MEANT TO GO IT ALONE!**

- **2nd Point to Ponder:** As you commit to “Gather”, you actively LOVE your church family *as worship to God* in the spirit of UNITY, endeavoring to maintain PEACE.
 - **Read: Ephesians 4:1-3 (NASB)**
1 Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, 3 being diligent to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.
- **3rd Point to Ponder:** As you commit to “Gather”, you SHUN isolation and EMBRACE God's family and His purposes.
 - **Read: Proverbs 18:1 (NASB)**
1 One who separates himself seeks his own desire; He quarrels against all sound wisdom.

Comment: Finally, Our call to “Gather” is clearly modeled in the early church and is the very best gauge for church's today to promote spiritual health.

Read: Acts 2:42-47 (NASB)

42 They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43 Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. 44 And all the believers were together and had all things in common; 45 and they would sell their property and possessions and share them with all, to the extent that anyone had need. 46 Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.

- The Greek word for “DEVOTED” (Proskarteréō) means to consistently show strength which prevails, to endure (remain firm), staying in a fixed direction. To continue to do something with intense effort, despite difficulty.
- **In a Redemptive Community the people are devoted to:**
 - **Apostles teaching** (the Word of God, sound doctrine)

- **We are learning together of this LIFE of the REDEEMED.**
- **Fellowship**
 - **Koinonia: properly, what is shared in common as the basis of fellowship (partnership, community). It has a sense of MUTUAL OBLIGATION. Not a group of unconnected individuals where the nature of the group is voluntary.**
 - This is why LIFE GROUPS have been and will continue to be a critical element of our fellowship.
- **Sharing of meals**
 - **The sharing of a meal is perhaps the most INTIMATE form of FELLOWSHIP one could have with fellow believers.**
 - A time of joy and generosity, being fully present with others.
- **Prayer**
 - **Prayer is a great UNIFIER and we do so with WATCHFUL EYES and GRATEFUL HEARTS.**
 - Prayer is, at its core, simply paying attention to God.

So, this is WHY we Gather...in a day when belonging to a church seems to “under ask” what God desires and even expects of His children, we believe that we need to be crystal clear on what we are committing ourselves to and what we are asking folks that plant root here to expect of themselves.

Do we have any questions tonight?

Pray

We will take an 8 minute break and at 5 minutes we will have a countdown timer turned on so if we can all be back we'll get started on time. Please help yourselves to the refreshments.