

Grow in Groups

Who We Are: Guarding Community

September 6, 2026

I. Opening Prayer

- Ask the Holy Spirit to help your group learn and hear what He would teach and encourage.
- Ask God to help everyone approach the conversation with humility, honesty, grace, and a desire to build one another up.

II. Weekly Sermon Discussion (20–40 minutes)

- Read the Scriptures and discuss what stood out to you.
- Engage with one another by reflecting and sharing what our Church is learning together.
- Example insights and questions are provided to help generate discussion if needed.
- Focus your conversation on the Scripture and how it applies to you. Be careful of straying off topic, and if you do, encourage one another to ask, **“How does this Scripture apply to this?”**

Sermon Focus: Guarding Community

Last week we saw that the early Church was set apart by its devotion to God-centered community. This week we looked at something that can either protect or destroy that community: **our mouths**.

Healthy Christian community requires people who understand their **new identity in Christ** and who learn to see others through **God’s lenses**—with mercy, hope, and an expectation of what God can do in their lives.

2 Corinthians 5:17 (NIV)

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!”

Discuss:

- What stood out to you most from the sermon?
- What does it mean practically to look at another believer through **“God’s lenses”**?
- How does remembering your own new identity in Christ change the way you view someone else’s failures or weaknesses?
- What is the difference between recognizing that something is wrong and becoming critical or judgmental toward the person?

The Older Brother: Wrong Mentality, Wrong Identity

Read **Luke 15:25–30**.

The older brother stayed near the Father’s house, but he did not share the Father’s heart. He viewed himself as someone who had earned what he deserved. The sermon identified three destructive behaviors flowing from this attitude:

Accusation — Comparison — Gossip

Discuss:

- What do you notice about the older brother’s attitude toward his father? Toward his brother?
- Why is comparison so dangerous to Christian community?
- Why can it sometimes feel easier to talk **about** someone than to lovingly talk **to** them?
- Which of the “Big Three”—accusation, comparison, or gossip—are you most tempted toward?
- How can someone be technically **right** about another person but still not be **righteous** in the way they respond?

Our Mouths Build Culture

Read **James 4:11–12 (NIV)**.

“Brothers and sisters, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against a brother or sister or judges them speaks against the law and judges it... There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you—who are you to judge your neighbor?”

The point of these verses was not that Christians should never recognize right and wrong. The issue is what our judgment produces.

God can judge and save. We often judge and simply destroy.

Our words can destroy relationships, unity, trust, and the kind of culture where people feel safe enough to admit what they are actually struggling with.

Discuss:

- What is the difference between righteous discernment and destructive judgment?
- Have you ever seen gossip or constant criticism change the culture of a family, workplace, church, or group?

- Why does hearing people criticize others make us less willing to be transparent about our own struggles?

Proverbs 26:20 (NIV)

“Without wood a fire goes out; without a gossip a quarrel dies down.”

III. Breaking Bread / Transparency

The sermon used the picture of **baggage**.

Every person carries things that still need to be brought to Jesus—sin, wounds, fears, failures, habits, struggles, generational personality traits, and things from our past.

Criticism, comparison, accusation, and gossip can hang additional baggage in front of people and make them afraid to expose what is really happening in their lives.

But transparency does the opposite.

When someone honestly shares what God has brought them through—or what God is presently working on—it tells everyone else:

“You are safe here. You don’t have to pretend.”

Revelation 12:11 (NKJV)

“And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony...”

The blood of Jesus changes our identity. Our testimony honestly tells what God has done—and is doing—in our lives.

Take some time for each person who is comfortable sharing.

- What “baggage” are you presently trying to bring to Jesus?
- Is there something you normally hide because you are afraid of how other Christians might view you?
- Where has God already brought freedom or change in your life that could encourage someone else? (Testimony)
- Is there an area where you need help from the Body of Christ instead of trying to carry it alone?

Group Reminder:

What is shared in transparency should be treated with love, grace, and confidentiality. We are here to help one another carry baggage to Jesus—not to hang more baggage on one another. (Remember anyone willing to talk with you about someone else is willing to talk about you to others.)

IV. Share & Prayer (10–20 minutes)

- Share with transparency and pray about what has already been shared.
- Stay free from criticism, comparison, accusation, and gossip.
- Ask God to give the group the Father's heart toward people.
- Pray that everyone would learn to see themselves and others through **God's lenses**.
- Ask God to make your group a safe place for honesty, repentance, encouragement, healing, and growth.
- Pray for the courage to testify openly about what God has done and is doing.

Closing Challenge for the Week

Before speaking about another person, ask:

“Will what I am about to say help this person carry their baggage to Jesus—or am I hanging more baggage on them?”

Guard community with your words.

Walk in transparency.

Speak life.

Help one another get to Jesus.