

What Is Cell Group?

Definition: *CG is our disciplined effort to speak the truth one to another in hopes that the church may be brought to maturity.*

This definition communicates several important ideas.

Unseen and Unspectacular

The extraordinary, grand, and spectacular draw and entice men and women. We desire to experience and participate in the breathtaking. If we consider the spectacular aspects of the human body, we may wonder at the faithful beating of the heart and its delivery system of life-filled blood to every part. We may think of the lungs expanding and compressing with the contractions of the diaphragm. We may think of the brain's mysterious experience of thoughts and feelings. In the human body, much exists to stir up wonder. However, crucial to every aspect of the body exist tiny cells invisible to the unaided eye.

"Cells are the basic building blocks of all living things."¹ Growth into maturity depends on the activity occurring in the cells. As they work with and relate to each other in hidden and unspectacular ways, the body matures while increasing in ability to do that which amazes.

The body of Christ experiences growth in a similar way. Maturity comes not through a captivating orator, heart-moving worship team, warm and inviting guest services, or well-trained and effective kids' ministry team. Instead, God has so designed his church to grow through ordinary, unspectacular conversations in which each man and woman speak the truth in the context of loving relationship.

These conversations often take place in the obscure corner of a coffee shop rather than in front of the stage's bright light. They often lack eloquent words or captivating illustrations. Immediately, nothing breathtaking seems to be occurring as a small group of women gather around a kitchen table to discuss God's Word and life. Often those who participate miss the wonder of such activity. But God in all His wisdom has chosen this as how His church grows strong, fruitful, and mature.

Disciplined Effort.

For the Olympics, the world's best athletes come together to entertain the world with spectacular displays of athleticism, strength, speed, body-control, and skill. The games capture and mesmerize witnesses who sit-back in awe as athletes do the unbelievable.

If one watches the Olympic broadcast with a careful ear or reads articles about these Olympic athletes with a careful eye, he will notice a constant recognition of the disciplined training to

¹ U.S National Library of Medicine, "What is a Cell?" Accessed August 9, 2021.
<https://medlineplus.gov/genetics/understanding/basics/cell/#start>

which each athlete subjected himself or herself. In each case, the jaw dropping performance came through a disciplined lifestyle. They observed their diet, their exercise routines, and their practice techniques with great discipline fully convinced that the improvement and greatness they desired would only come through doing the right practices in a controlled and repeated manner.

Similarly, if the church desires to grow into the mature, radiant, beautiful, glorious, and praise-worthy body of Christ, she must give herself to the disciplined work of speaking the truth to one another. Each member must learn the discipline of knowing the Scriptures, repentance, confession, praise, meeting together, listening well, and speaking rightfully.

Those activities require discipline because they oppose our natural desires and tendencies. Naturally we cover our sins; we do not expose them. We prefer running around busy with tasks over stopping so that God by His Word and Spirit might work on us. We prefer remaining quiet rather than speaking with authority and confidence. We find it easier to sit back and identify the needed changes in others thinking, feelings, and actions than to ask others to join us in our struggle to be transformed in our own thinking, feelings, and actions.

Speaking the truth one to another may be simple, but the maturity such activity will bring only comes to those who discipline themselves. We acknowledge the significance and difficulty, so we include "disciplined effort" in our definition.

Speaking the truth.

Recently the culture has adopted the value of "Speak Your Truth." When one speaks his truth, he cast off the pressures to conform and the fears of judgment by others so that he might say openly and live out freely what he genuinely feels and thinks. "Speak Your Truth," is a call to forsake phoniness by acting in line with your head and heart. If you think it then act as if it is reality. If you desire it do not deny yourself any longer.

When Christians gather to "speak the truth" to one another they engage in an activity much different than the self-assuring back-and-forth found in the culture. In contrast to the culture, biblical "speaking the truth" differs in several ways.

God's Truth Gives Freedom to Be Honest.

The culture has diagnosed two obstacles to honesty. A desire to conform/blend in and a fear of being judged/ excluded. We think in our hearts, "If people truly knew what I desired or how I felt or what I thought, they would know I do not belong here. I do not fit in. I do not meet the standard." These obstacles keep us performing a certain way in sight of others while keeping our thoughts and desires tucked away behind a curtain.

Thankfully, the gospel comes with power to release us from the cycle of conformity. The truth of God reveals our identity and purpose while also enabling us to walk accordingly. In addition, the gospel frees us from the fear of judgment and exile by announcing to us that the supreme judge has declared us innocent, spotless, and guiltless. The Christian who believes the truth has freedom to say, "This is how I think and feel." She no longer must pretend or perform an act while hiding the true contents of her mind and heart.

God's Truth Exposes "Our" Truth.

Our hearts possess great power to deceive. Men and women struggle to know and understand their own hearts. Making sense of your thoughts can prove quite the tasks. Humans experience a complex and often competing variety of thoughts and feelings.

Thankfully, God's truth sheds light into the deep, dark corners of our soul. His truth has sharp edges that cut the heart leaving its true contents exposed and discernable. The "Speak Your Truth" movement relies upon you to know and understand your own mind and heart. The practice of speaking God's truth enables you to know it and understand it rightly.

God's truth judges "your" truth.

The culture elevates your truth to a place of authority. Your truth has position to judge all alternate truth claims while possessing the authority to command your actions. In this world, you answer to "your truth" - the true thoughts, feelings, and desires of your heart and mind. To disobey these has become the cultures understanding of sin.

Rather than elevating their thoughts and feelings, Christians subject themselves to the truth revealed by God. Whenever the truth judges their thoughts to be futile or their desires to be corrupt, they repent. They turn from "their" truth, and they adopt God's. They submit their practice to the thoughts and desires consistent with God's truth rather than their own.

One to another.

While the current culture celebrates men and women who speak "their" truth, the culture equally despises those who assert "the" truth. Claims of truth that reach beyond the individual have been deemed as intolerant, unloving, arrogant, and oppressive. Even clearly observable realities such as humans are born as male or female must not be asserted with certainty, for such claims will pressure and burden those who prefer being something they are not. Even the truth - God made man male and female - restricts some from speaking "their" truth; therefore, "the truth" must be muted.

Christians possess a different perspective on truth. They intentionally engage in this activity of "speaking the truth one to another" for several reasons.

God's truth is good.

They love the word of God. To them, God's truth is sweet as honey and more valuable than gold.

The end of "your" truth is destruction.

There is a way that seems right to man but its end is destruction. Those who follow their heart's desire will reap ruin. When men choose to obey their own understanding and do what their own eyes deem right will fall into a pit. Knowing this, Christians love each other well when they speak God's truth to each other. Their tongues and lips are used by God to give light and grace so that they together might walk no longer as children of darkness.

Often men forget. Men are earthly creatures. As we live this life under the sun, the things we can see, smell, touch, and feel tend to cloud our view of the unseen realities, especially the truth about the invisible God. When we see the wicked prosper, we struggle to see and believe that God is just. When our deep pain goes on for years, we struggle to trust that God works all things for the good of those who love him. When our sin lays the heavy burden of shame on our heads, we forget that God has covered our sins with the blood of Christ.

By speaking the truth one to another, Christians work hard to remind each other of the truth. Together they help each other “set their minds on the things above” (Col. 3:2). Together they turn away from “their” truth to remember and embrace the truth revealed by God.

Brought to maturity.

The one speaking “her” truth and the Christian speaking God’s truth have a similar goal - they both desire to be different than they are. The non-believer speaks her truth in hopes to become her true self. One woman stated this desire in this way:

“Somewhere beneath the layers of people-pleasing, white lies, and insecurity, I knew there was a bold, confident, self-actualized woman. I wanted, more than anything, to become her.”²

According to this same woman, the way to becoming the woman she desired to be, the woman she saw as her true self, she would have to learn “authentic communication.” She would need to “speak her truth” rather than suppress it out of fear or shame.

In contrast, Christians do not desire to look like the man or woman hidden somewhere deep within them. Instead, they desire to look like Christ. When Christians investigate their own hearts and assess their true self, they see a proud, selfish, corrupt, unloving, unwise, unrighteous, rebellious, and deceitful sinner. Christians see the need to put to death their former selves rather than nurture and actualize him or her. This desire to be something new and different comes through seeing and beholding God in all his glory. Those who have seen the love, the righteousness, the wisdom, the mercy, the justice, and the faithfulness of God abandon themselves and cry out, “Create in me a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within me.”

When Christians sit down to speak the truth, they do so with a desire to look like Christ. They behold him together trusting that God through his Spirit will transform them from one degree of glory to another.

² Magee, Haley, “9 Easy Ways You Can Speak Your Truth Today.” Visited August 9, 2021. <https://tinybuddha.com/blog/9-easy-ways-you-can-speak-your-truth-today/>