

Community Is Messy:
The Perils and Promise
of Small Group Ministry
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National Ministry Leader Spills the Dirt on Group Life and Discipleship

In the church, community and discipleship are often considered solutions to problems. Community addresses the problem of isolation and loneliness, and discipleship can solve the problem of spiritual immaturity. As we try to apply these solutions, however, we discover that community and discipleship are riddled with problems of their own. Community is messy. And discipleship is hard.

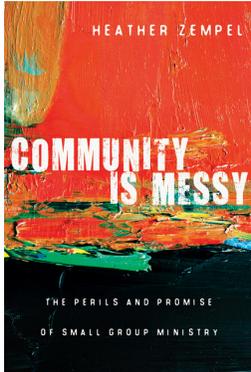
Drawing on her background in environmental engineering and her role as pastor of discipleship at National Community Church (NCC) in Washington, D.C., Heather Zempel assesses the perils and possibilities inherent in small groups and other environments for Christian community. *Community Is Messy* helps leaders begin to see the inherent “mess” of such gatherings as raw material for arriving at something beautiful.

Key elements include

- underlying principles of the small group and discipleship ministry at NCC and how these principles look in action
- portraits of both the successes and failures of NCC’s ministry that recognize the unique and non-transferrable demographic for which the model was created
- a collection of values applicable across church cultures and models of group life, including non-linear discipleship, creating safe environments, and continually “blowing up” community and discipleship
- leadership and ministry insight for small group leaders and pastors
- a road map for personal spiritual growth

BIO

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY



Heather Zempel, M.A., discipleship pastor, national speaker and author

Heather Zempel is the discipleship pastor at National Community Church (NCC) in Washington, D.C., where she serves on the teaching team and regularly preaches at weekend services. In addition to her leadership at NCC, Heather has spoken on community and discipleship at national conferences, including Willow Creek Group Life, Orange, Connect, RightNow, Group Life South and Vital.

She serves on the Willow Creek Group Life Advisory Board as well as the editorial team for Rightnow.com's training website and frequently trains pastors and small group leaders at churches across the country.

Heather previously published *Sacred Roads: Exploring the Historic Paths of Discipleship*, including DVD leader guides, with Threads/Lifeway. She is a regular contributor to www.smallgroups.com and blogs at www.heatherzempel.com. Before serving at her church, Heather worked in the U.S. Senate as an environment and energy policy adviser from 2001 to 2005.