



HOW TO TRANSITION WELL FROM COLLEGE TO CO-ED LIFEGROUP

College is a utopia of community. There are always events to do, people to do them with, and loads of expendable time, energy, and (sometimes) cash to resource it. But when you graduate, your community is going to change. Life is going to look different.

LifeGroups are going to be different too. You won't have three-hour LifeGroup nights where everyone gets to share everything on their minds. You won't accidentally bounce into people as you walk around campus and have an impromptu lunch hangout. To have an authentic community will require you to work at it and have the right expectations. If you don't, you may be frustrated that community doesn't come as naturally as it once did and may lead to resentment. Dietrich Bonhoeffer warns against misplaced expectations of community in his book *Life Together*:

The person who loves their dream of community will destroy community, but the person who loves those around them will create community.

In other words, expectations are critical going into a co-ed LifeGroup. This doesn't mean that tight community is impossible when you graduate from college. It is just more complicated and takes intentionality from everyone. Here are some ways it will look different and how you can press in to thrive in a co-ed LifeGroup.

College community	Post-college Community
Happens almost naturally	Requires work and diligence. Has to be prioritized intentionally with the rhythms already set in place. If this isn't prioritized, it can easily lead to victimization thoughts like, "I'm pursuing everyone and no one is pursuing me back" or "nobody is free to hang out" or "nobody invites me to hang out." Relationships will take more

	<p>initiative, more planning ahead (as there's less room for spontaneity), and more patience. It's worth it!</p>
<p>Communal space everywhere (library, coffee shops, all of campus)</p> <p>This leads to seemingly "spontaneous" interweaving of life.</p>	<p>More and more distance between and isolated spaces of retreat.</p> <p>This requires intentional overcoming the physical distance to interweave our lives.</p>
<p>Relative freedom from responsibilities other than school, work, and friendships.</p>	<p>Growing number of responsibilities to juggle/manage</p>
<p>Lots of wide open blocks of schedule or more flexible schedule restraints; commitment to community can usually be made.</p>	<p>Increasingly complex and inflexible schedules because of increasing external responsibilities (work, kids, etc.).</p> <p>As your season of life evolves (from single, to married, to kids), time becomes more limited. This requires inviting people into your complexity and you inviting yourselves into their complexity. (e.g. "Can I join for family dinner this Friday?")</p>
<p>Abundance of community leads to lots of fun exploration of and interaction with new people and new groups.</p>	<p>With more demands on time/demands that can't be rearranged, like work and kids, post-college adults have to develop boundaries and say no to some things so that they can say yes to their priorities. This means smaller social circles and can leave members feeling isolated or trapped in their routines. Intentionality is key and building new relationships takes extra effort and sacrifice.</p>
<p>Ease of establishing cross-gender friendships, often with variable amounts of health -- meaning these relationships may have healthy boundaries or may be caught in drama because of being in the dating stage of life.</p>	<p>Difficulty of cross-gender friendships.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Married friends should go out of their way to pursue friendship and invitation with single folks. - Single folks should also invite married folks over (and invite yourself into their rhythms) - Married folks - Be self-aware. Marriage is a wonderful tool for sanctification and is both a blessing and a challenge. It can

	be tempting to talk only about marriage challenges, to forget what it feels like to be single, to design rhythms that are easier for those with partners, etc. Aim to create a group environment that is equally welcoming to married and single members.
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Resources

["The Five Stages of Community \(Or, Why the Unicorn Must Die\)" by Midtown Fellowship Home sermon series](#)

[*When Church Was a Family: Recapturing Jesus' Vision for Authentic Christian Community* by Joseph H. Hellerman](#)

[*Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* by Robert Putnam](#)

["How Friendships Change in Adulthood" from The Atlantic](#)

["Disposable Friendships in a Mobile World" from The Atlantic](#)