

May 3, 2017



Keeping Small Groups on Track

Most local churches have adopted some form of small group structure over the past 40 years. While there are a great variety of applications and purposes expressed through them, there are a couple of Biblical purposes we must keep central lest they begin to drift off track.

Every Gospel contains a post resurrection commission of Jesus. Mark 16:15-18 and Luke 24:47 speaks of "go into all the world...preach the gospel about repentance and forgiveness of sins...and baptizing those who receive Him."

The other two contain something that directly pertains to a core purpose of small groups. Matthew 28:18-19 speaks of "making disciples (followers who walk with Jesus) and "teaching them to put into practice all that Jesus commanded." In John 21:15-17 Jesus encourages us to "feed and take care of lambs and sheep" from the motivation loving Him.

Two Pillar's of Small Groups

Making followers of Jesus (disciples) who put into practice His word, as well as taking care of God's people should be at the heart of small groups. This cannot be accomplished in once a week meetings alone. It takes a way of life together walking with Jesus and one another as we engage in His mission every day.

We never want our small groups to become Bible studies or fellowship groups designed to gain information about Jesus. We don't want them to support shallow friendships in a quasi-Christian subculture. The goal of walking together is centered around caring for His sheep, helping each other follow Jesus, and putting into practice His word in every area of life. This is best accomplished in the same way Jesus did it with His disciples, living everyday life together engaging in His mission (Mk 3:14, Lk 9:1).

If Jesus walked in a small group as He fulfilled His mission then we may need to as well...Just sayin!

We don't gather together simply to enjoy each other's company or learn more information about God. The goal is to help each other stay faithful to Jesus, put into practice His word in every area of life, care for one another (the 59 "one another's"), and engage in everyday mission. Following a program of once a week small group meetings is no guarantee we are moving towards these goals.

What is Jesus' perspective of you small group gatherings? Is He content with them producing the following?

- Christians who sit in circles in a home and talk to one another.
- People who read and comment on the Bible but little is known about how, or if they are putting it into practice.
- People who rant that we should "get out there" and do something that matters.
- People who awkwardly end their gathering by praying a shopping list of "personal prayer requests" rather than Jesus' pattern of prayer "You Kingdom come and Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."
- People who go home uncared for, unchallenged, and unchanged.

We don't want small groups to trick us into thinking that just by having them we are automatically making disciples who are living as God's family who care for each other as we engage in mission. We have to constantly and intentionally pursue Him and His design.

Three scriptures that need to be put into practice both in gatherings as well as in the ongoing life of small groups. Walking together with others will not help much if you are not actively walking with Jesus. If you are following Jesus as a disciple then relationships among God's family make it easier to hear and respond to His voice, and help keep us from backsliding.

- **Encouragement to keep hearing and responding to His voice:** *Hebrews 3:12-15 Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. (13) But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin...(15) while it is said, "TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS, AS WHEN THEY PROVOKED ME."*
- **"Holding fast" to Him and each other as well as stimulating each other to practice love and good deeds:** *Hebrews 10:23-25 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering...(24) and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, (25) not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.*
- **Hearing words that help encourage weary and discouraged people:** *Isaiah 50:4 The Lord GOD has given Me the tongue of disciples, That I may know how to sustain the weary one with a word. He awakens Me morning by morning, He awakens My ear to listen as a disciple.*

Remember that we are always seeking to put it into practice His word that comes up in our small group gatherings through the gifts of the Spirit, worship, fellowship, testimonies, or looking at the Bible. Here are questions we should always be considering in small group gatherings regarding His word.

- **What is Jesus speaking to you with this knowledge and how will you respond?**
- **What is a practical step that you can take to put this word into practice?**

- **What are you planning on doing with this knowledge?** Articulate at least one step of obedience you will put into practice this week.
- **How will the hearing of this truth affect your life?** This interrupts the consumer mindset that we often have in the church world.
- **How will what we heard affect us in loving God as well as loving and serving others (the 2 great commandments of Jesus)?** The endpoint of discipleship is our lives reoriented around loving God and loving/serving others.
- **What are some of the challenges to put Jesus' word into practice so we can encourage and pray for you?**

Doug Kreighbaum
dkreighbaum@gmail.com
www.dougkeighbaum.com
www.c2cfamily.org