

Small Groups In The Church

As we go through life we all belong to small groups.

All of us have a need to belong.

Born Into Small Group – Family

This is where our basic needs were met.

Our security is often rooted in knowing that at least one other person loves and cares for us.

Our Education Is Linked To A Small Group – School

Within this small group we find other small groups that we are part of.

Peer Groups – athletic teams, drama groups, various clubs, etc.

Entering Adult Life We Are Still Linked With Small Groups

Work teams – political parties – professional groups – maybe a church – social clubs, etc.

All of this is our seeking to satisfy a natural need built into our nature.

Genesis 2:18 [NIV] *“The LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.”*

God created all humans with a desire to be part of a group.

It is against our nature to be alone.

Why Small Groups In The Church?

Spiritual growth, like emotional growth, does not occur in a vacuum.

Spiritual growth comes as we relate to others in the Body of Christ, His Church.

Why then do so many Christians **fail** to find spiritual stimulation in their local church?

One key reason is that churches today, in general, lack the essential community spirit that characterised the churches in the first century of Christendom.

Because of the large size of most churches, we just don't get to know, really know, the people who are our brothers and sisters in Christ.

By meeting in small groups we make intimacy at least possible.

One of the best ways to learn and apply the scriptures to our life is to study them in a small group.

In a small group we can encourage and help one another discover and obey God's Word in ways that are simply impossible when part of a large group.

A small group can provide a local base from which members can reach out and minister to others beyond the group.

Members of a small group may help each other witness to non-Christian neighbours and friends and together see them come to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, often resulting in new members coming into the small group.

Small groups are an essential integral part of any church.

A network of small groups within the church enables the church to grow and make a difference in the world.

Small fellowship groups meeting in homes can be the basic building blocks for personal discipleship, for people meeting together can encourage each other's growth in Christ.

What makes a small group work effectively so that everyone can experience it as a source of both comfort and stimulation?

Good small groups do not happen automatically.

They take time, commitment, understanding and the power of the Holy Spirit.

God has in the past and continues now to use small groups in the lives of His People and in the work of His Church.

God Makes The Church, We Don't

Just as we did **not** decide who would be a member in our family and who would not, so it is with the church family.

We are all part of the Body of Christ, **there is no such thing as a lone-ranger Christian.**

There are two related things in life that we cannot do alone.

One is to be married and the other is to be a Christian.

1 Peter 2:9-10 [NIV] *“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. **Once you were not a people**, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”*

Peter wants us to know where we have come from.

Nowhere !!

Once we were “no people”.

We tried to be a community but it was based on a foundation of sand.

We chose others based on physical beauty, intelligence, personality, or because we thought they could meet our physical needs.

The Good News is that now we have received the Mercy of God and have been chosen by Him.

Our potential for community is **not** based on our work, beauty or intellect, but on God's Mercy.

Our forgiveness in Christ is the cornerstone on which we can now build our lives within an eternal community.

John 15:16-19 [NIV] *"You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. This is my command: Love each other. "If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you."*

Chosen by God to bear fruit through our love for God and one another.

John 17:20-26 [NIV] *"My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. "Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world. "Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them."*

Jesus poured His Life [love, for God is love] into twelve disciples, expecting that they would change the world.

That was a small group.

This group went through some tough times.

Yet Jesus chose a small group and promised that their love for one another would have an impact, causing others to believe in Him.

Acts 1:8 [NIV] *"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."*

Jesus turned His work over to a small group plus the Holy Spirit.

John 14:12 [NIV] *"I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even **greater things than these**, because I am going to the Father."*

That small group plus the promised Holy Spirit certainly did do "greater things" than Christ was able to accomplish in His three years of ministry.