

A PLACE TO BELONG

8-25-19

Acts 2:41, 42, 46, 47 NIV Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.⁴²They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.⁴⁶Every day they continued to meet together in the **temple courts**. They broke bread **in their homes** and ate together with glad and sincere hearts,⁴⁷praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

- The church grew in one day from 120 people (Acts 1:15) to more than 3,000 (Acts 2:41). To help these new believers grow in their faith, the church was divided into smaller groups.
- Acts 2:46 tells us that the Jerusalem church was divided into two mutually supportive groups: (1) a large group that met in the temple, and (2) small groups that "broke bread" in homes.
- Believers experienced unity by meeting regularly as an entire fellowship and they developed a more intimate community by meeting in smaller groups. (Clinton and Ohlschlager 2002, p. 442)

Ted Lowe and Doug Fields make three observations about the value of Small Groups.

(Married People by Lowe & Fields)

I. Life Groups create community.

- A. Christians are called by God to be involved in building biblical communities of love by connecting with one another in the Spirit.

Romans 12:10-18 NIV Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves.¹¹ Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.¹² Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.¹³ Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.¹⁴ Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.¹⁶ Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.¹⁷ Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody.¹⁸ If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

Ephesians 4:1-3, 16 NIV As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.² Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.³ Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace...¹⁶ From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

1 Peter 4:8-11 NIV Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.⁹ Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.¹⁰ Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.¹¹ If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words

of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

B. Some places were not designed for us to merely attend.

1. Hunting club
2. Country club
3. Church – we are called to be engaged, not just attend.

a) Some “attend” church, while others “belong” to a church. The difference is that one has a vested interest in the place where they worship.

C. We can experience community when we move from being a consumer to being a contributor.

1. What gifts do you have to share?

II. Life Groups promote accountability.

A. Confess your sins to God to be forgiven; confess your sins to others to be healed.

1 John 1:9 NIV If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

James 5:16 NIV Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.

1. We should look for release, not just relief. (2 Corinthians 7:10, Romans 13:14)

B. Who has the authority to call you “up” and speak into your life?

Proverbs 18:1-2 NKJV A man who isolates himself seeks his own desire; He rages against all wise judgment. ² A fool has no delight in understanding, But in expressing his own heart.

Proverbs 12:1, 15 NIV Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates correction is stupid.¹⁵ The way of a fool seems right to him, but a wise man listens to advice.

1. Stages of relationships: Acceptance, affirmation, accountability, authority. – Stu Weber

III. Life Groups provide a place where we can encourage one another and stimulate faith and bear one another's burdens

- A. We should surround ourselves with those who will inspire us to be and become more like Christ and encourage us to do the good works God predestined us to do.

Hebrews 10:24-25 NIV And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. ²⁵Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Ephesians 2:10 NIV For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

- B. We will all likely face times when we need people to help bear our burdens and pray for us.

Galatians 6:2 NKJV Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

Christian Life Action Steps

- 1. *Come to the understanding that Christianity is not to be lived out alone and work to build unity within our community.***

- 2. *Find the place in the family where you can contribute and begin experiencing a new sense of belonging.***
 - a. *Join one of the Life Groups.***
 - b. *Begin serving on a ministry team.***

- 3. *Encourage others in the faith and bear one another's burdens.***