

LIFE with Jesus in Community

Small Groups

SMALL GROUPS

If a foot were not attached to a body, could it walk?

If an ear were left to itself, apart from its head, could it hear?

This is the way the Bible talks about Jesus' people: we cannot thrive apart from connection with one another. And only together do we express the fullness of the body of Christ. Jesus calls us to practice community, and one of the most powerful ways we do this is by gathering with one another in small groups.

Jesus lives this practice from eternity. God is a community: A Trinity of love. But here on earth, Jesus expanded His community to include men and women. In the Gospels we see Jesus doing almost nothing alone. At the beginning of His ministry, He collects a group of twelve disciples who then go with Him everywhere. At other times, He draws an even smaller group out of that group to accompany Him when He is doing something especially remarkable or needs the support of His friends: when His body is changed into His glory-self, when He heals a little girl who was dead, and when He prays in the Garden of Gethsemane before His crucifixion.¹

Jesus then tell His disciples to love one another as He has loved them—to wash each other's feet and to lay down their lives for one another. He commissions Peter to lead His church after His death. Clearly, He intends for us to do this Christian life together.

THE PRACTICE: SMALL GROUPS

Small groups of disciples take many forms. Some folks meet for breakfast, or gather by Zoom with a glass of wine; some groups hike, some share dinner; some groups are co-ed; others are just for women or for men; some groups study the Bible together, others simply share and pray.

But there a few essential ingredients for a group that serves to sustain its members in the faith, hope, and love that are in Christ: commitment, vulnerability, and intentionality about deepening one another's love for God and for others.

This practice asks you seek to create or join a small group shaped around these essential ingredients.

For Existing Small Groups

If you already have a small group, great! Perhaps now is a good time to evaluate and tweak the ways your group practice being together. Here are some questions to get you started:

1. Is this group meeting the needs of its people for companionship and encouragement in the Lord?

¹ Matthew 17:1-3; Mark 5:37-43; Matthew 26:36-46

2. If not, what do members of the group think might help the group more effectively meet those needs?
 - More or less frequent meetings?
 - More or less “small talk” or socializing?
 - More time for prayer? (See notes below)
 - A change in format? (See suggestions below)
 - If you are a co-ed group, would it be helpful to break off and spend some time as just women or just men?
 - Would some fun be good? Hiking, snowshoeing, eating out together?

3. Is your group open to new members? Are there any isolated people you know who might like to join you?

SUGGESTED PRACTICES FOR SMALL GROUPS

Go through “The Invitations of Jesus” by Kay Morrison, Adam Long, and Doug Brown.

Go through “The Practices of Jesus” on Greenwood Community Church’s website.

Read a book of the Bible together, one bit at a time, and discuss.

Practice Lectio Divina together.

This is a practice of prayerfully reading through a passage of Scripture several times, slowly and quietly, in order to listen for the Lord to speak to you. See the practice on Lectio Divina for a step-by-step guide to this simple, enriching practice and for guidance on how to do this as a group.

Try Group Spiritual Direction

Spiritual direction is the practice of intentionally paying attention to and encouraging another person’s relationship with the Lord—not with their spouse, roommate, boss, or child. Just the Lord. How is that person’s connection with God? What might God be inviting that person to?

To do this together, ask the Lord to be present with you. Then give one person 10 – 15 minutes to share about something in his or her life. When they finish, take about a minute of silence, listening for any questions the Lord might bring to mind or words of affirmation or blessing He might give you. A Scripture may also come to your mind. Resist giving advice or sharing stories of your own. Remember, you are trying to pay attention to and encourage that person’s relationship with the Lord. Finish with this person by asking respectful questions, speaking words of affirmation, and praying for that person’s relationship with God. Then move to the next person.

Find a way to serve together in your community.

If you don't have a small group

1. Contact Adam Long about joining a Greenwood Group. (Consider whether you are willing to lead a new group.)
2. Or, consider, do you have friends you could pull together into a group? Pray about asking them, then reach out! Form a group—discussing together your hopes, expectations, and commitments. Be open to change and flexibility as your group matures.

INTERESTING QUOTES

“Personalities united can contain more of God and sustain the force of his greater presence much better than scattered individuals. The fire of God kindles higher as the brands are heaped together and each is warmed by the other’s flame. The members of the body must be in contact if they are to sustain and be sustained by each other,” Dallas Willard.

“Small groups are not a ministry of the church, small groups are not a program of the church, small groups are not an outreach of the church, small groups are not an event of the church, small groups are the church,” Pastor Rick Warren.

HELPFUL SCRIPTURES

“And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near,” Hebrews 10:24.

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another,” John 13:34-5.

“Whoever loves God must also love his brother,” 1 John 4:21.