

The Method of Jesus ~ Small Group Ministry

When Jesus spoke the Great Commission to his followers, “Go and make disciples of all nations . . .” small groups were implied! Their three years with him were in the context of a small group growing into more groups.



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Essential Elements for Small Groups / Class Meetings:

- Affirmation from the Pastor; Two lay leaders who both have a heart to make disciples and will commit for 1 year. (Jesus sent them out in twos!)
- Identify 4-6 members who will commit to the group for a season (12 – 16 weeks)
- Hospitality and welcome
- An atmosphere of grace and truth (John 1:14)
- Starting and stopping on time (We recommend 75-90 minute meetings)
- Have good weekly communication on the details of the group (date, times, location) & encouragement
- Begin with the book: *The Class Meeting: Reclaiming a Forgotten (and Essential) Small Group Experience*, Kevin Watson; We recommend 2 chapters each week so 4 weeks with the book
- Confidentiality communicated and respected
- An opening short encouragement from the Bible and prayer
- An openness to the power and Presence of the Holy Spirit
- Answering the question: ‘How is your walk with God?’ Sharing of personal growth and struggles
- A willingness for the leaders and the group to be honest & vulnerable as the group seeks God together
- Solid facilitation of the group so that tangents, oversharing, imbalances in sharing are minimized
- The leader / facilitator keeps the conversation going, asking key questions and encouraging sharing
- Prayer for each members needs with expectation of answered prayer
- We recommend the group be open to seekers who are not yet Christians
- A growing understanding that the goal of the group is for us all to become more and more like Jesus in our attitudes, actions, thoughts and speech.

Bonus Elements:

- An apprentice to the group leader who is in training to lead a future group
- Shepherding & communication with members during the week according to their needs
- Some online forum or app to keep learning, sharing, prayer flowing through the week
- A group that fellowships, studies & prays together is great, what if they served together?

Visioning for Small Group Ministry:

- A church that wants to become a church of small groups needs buy in from the leaders that this is a method of Jesus that we’re committing to long term – like even a lifetime!
- The approach needs to be more relational than programmatic. The goal here is to create redemptive circles that help each of us walk closer with the One who is the way, the truth and the life!
- These groups are not Bible studies, but rather the Bible studying us! We set the goal to know, love and follow Christ and then as people share the Holy Spirit will be working in every heart. We avoid arguments and heavy confrontations. We use questions to help people be introspective.

- The church needs to make sure there are groups that would welcome and shepherd people who are not yet Christ followers. Connecting the small group vision with the Great Commission is key, we have work to do, wonderful work with God!
- Creating teams of equipped group leaders, facilitators and persons with the gift of hospitality is a great strategy. Having two or three people committed to the success of the group generates a powerful synergy.
- In a good small group gathering each person participates. It takes some time for trust to develop and for people to feel comfortable sharing and praying. Asking each person to share 1) something they are thankful for and 2) something they need prayer for, is a good starting place. The Holy Spirit will guide us in creating an atmosphere of grace and truth; a place where people want to be because they are loved, encouraged and challenged to grow in faith and in authentic relationships with brothers and sisters in Christ.
- Many groups settle for passing on more information to the members of the group. So the major emphasis is learning new insights and truths from the Bible or curriculum. A better goal is sanctification (Christ-likeness) of the members. So the information must lead to transformation. Helping the group to see this 'goal' is what Jesus taught is key.
- We are in challenging times in the pandemic. It's crucial that care is taken for the safety of the group as well as finding the comfort levels of people in the group.

We Will Provide:

- Training to equip your leaders to run the groups.
- The books
- Scripture passages to use for encouragement and to move into the question of 'How is your walk with Christ?'
- A monthly conference call or face to face meeting with the leaders
- A contact list for questions
- Life in His Name Ministries support materials, online and documents

Other Considerations:

- Create an online group via Zoom or have Zoom as an option