

The Benefits of Small Group Bible Studies

By Doug Hamilton

In the last lesson we covered the history of the small group Bible studies from the Bible. We established from Genesis through the New Testament that people were meeting in groups at many locations and covering many topics. In the second lesson of the three-part series, we will cover some of the many benefits of the same.

I) Fulfillment of the Great Commission in our Lives

We have a charge from the Lord to take the gospel of Jesus Christ to all reaches of the world.

- Matthew 28:19-20 "...make disciples of all the nations..."
- Matthew 24:14 "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world..."
- Matthew 5:16 "Let your light shine before men..."
- Ephesians 6:15 "...shod YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL..."
- Philippians 1:5 "...your participation in the gospel..."
- Philippians 4:3 "...shared my struggle in *the cause of* the gospel..."
- 2 Timothy 1:8 "...join with *me* in suffering for the gospel..."
- Romans 10:14-15 How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? ¹⁵ How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, "HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GOOD NEWS OF GOOD THINGS!"

There are many ways that this can be accomplished, but only a few ways in our own backyard which to do this. The most effective way that I have ever found to share the gospel is not through the pulpit, from a desk or a street corner, but from a seat in your home. Here are just a few of the benefits that a congregation experiences when engaging in the small group Bible studies.

II) Numerical Growth

- Acts 2:46-47 Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, ⁴⁷ praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.
- One of the key elements in the growth of the early church was the "house to house" method. It was in the homes of prospects, referrals and young Christians that friendships were forged, knowledge was deepened and the kingdom was being increased day by day. In fact, I have never personally heard of a small group home Bible study program that did not yield souls in the kingdom of God.

The Church was built on the Small Group Bible Study Pattern

- Even before the starting of the church, the apostles were having a small group Bible study on "How to replace a renegade apostle" in Acts 1.
- It was an extremely small group Bible study that resulted in an Ethiopian eunuch being baptized at a roadside pond in Acts 8.
- It was a small group Bible study on "How to win a gentile to the kingdom of God" that Cornelius was won to the Lord in Acts 11.
- It was a small group Bible study alongside a stream that won a lady named Lydia and her household to Christ in Acts 16.

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- It was small group Bible study on “How to Start a Prison Ministry” that won a jailer and his whole household to the kingdom of Jesus in Acts 16.
- It was a small group Bible study program on “How to Convert a Synagogue to a Church family that resulted in the conversion of Crispus’ household in Act 18.

III) Increased Fellowship

- *Heb 10:24-25* “...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.
- There is nothing in this passage that states this is referring to the assembling of the whole church on the first day of the week. Yet because it does not exclude that application, hence we are safe in using it thereof for that purpose.
- Question: Why do we not apply the same to small group Bible studies? If a church family had a problem of assembling together on the fifth day of the week for the purpose of studying, would that be good? What if some in the congregation hindered meeting on the second day of the week for a Bible study in the home?

The greatest execution of the “one another” principles can be carried out in the small group Bible studies.

- Jesus said in John 13:34-35 "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.³⁵ "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." The key phrase in the passage is to love one another. They will know we are Christians by our love. We must remember that these moments of Jesus lives were being carried out in a room with His twelve closest disciples. This the environment we are referring to.

Put these two phrases together and see if they fit: One Another, Small Group Bible Study.

- Rom 12:10-13 Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor;¹¹ not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord;¹² rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer,¹³ contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality.
 - Notice that the last one that is mentioned in the list actually deals with hospitality, the one another that emanates from the home. Is it possible that devotion, preference, fervency, service, rejoicing, persevering, prayer and other needs being met can all occur in the home? I have seen it numerous times.
- Rom 15:5-6 Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus;⁶ that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.
 - There are so many issues and topics that the Bible directly or indirectly addresses. We are bound to not be in agreement on all the issues no matter how hard we try. On the other hand, when men and women are regularly sitting down and studying the scriptures together, the odds of coming into like-mindedness increases greatly.
- Rom 15:7 Wherefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God.

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- There is nothing more accepting than having a person in your home. Once they cross that threshold of the door, they are transitioned from an outsider to an insider.
- Eph 5:19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord;
 - There are many times in our small group Bible studies that we will have a couple songs or a reading of an encouraging Psalm or two. In fact we can and have had studies on those very topics, hence fulfilling that verse in our lives.
- James 5:16 Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.
 - It is not at all uncommon in a small group Bible study to find members of the church lowering the mask of pride and admit to weaknesses in their marriage, their emotions, in their work habits and many other struggles. This is because the more opportunities that Christians gather together, the more they will seek out each other for spiritual assistance.

IV) Higher Resistance to Sin

- Heb 3:13 But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is {still} called "Today," lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.
 - As mentioned above, there is an increase in fellowship when the small group Bible study program is in place. With the increase in knowledge that comes with the same, there is an expectation to become stronger against the sin in our life.
- James wrote in *James 4:17 Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin.*
 - Jesus expects us to learn more about our salvation and draw closer to Him every day. There are natural immunities that come from regular study of God's word. We learn that something is wrong in our life and then are expected to work on it until it is no longer an obstacle. *Luke 12:47 "And that slave who knew his master's will and did not get ready or act in accord with his will, will receive many lashes,*
- Peter wrote in 1 Peter 2:2-3 "...like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, ³ if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.
 - If you have ever had the pleasure to see a new born babe seek out food, you know that desire is great. The desire the Christian is to have for learning the workings of God should be equally great. If we expect to grow in respect to our salvation, that desire for the "pure milk of the word" must be met. How much more would it be met if we went to a couple small groups a week? The increased learning makes it possible to slow the disease of sin in our lives.
 - The second half of the Great Commission says "...teaching them to observe all that I commanded you (Mt 28:20)
- One of the greatest benefits of the small group Bible study program is the ability to develop a higher resistance to sin.

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V) Teacher Development

- Paul wrote to Timothy in *2 Timothy 2:2* *The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.* He is reminding one of his primary responsibilities is to train up a new generation of teachers to carry on the doctrine for many more generations to come.
- This was the pattern that Paul actually used to develop Timothy. *1 Timothy 1:2* “To Timothy, *my true child in the faith...*” Paul took Timothy under his wing like a father and developed him into a great teacher and evangelist.
 - **Paul guided Timothy as a father.** *Acts 16:3* Paul wanted this man to go with him; and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those parts, for they all knew that his father was a Greek.
 - **Paul instructed Timothy in the Christian ways as a father.** *1 Cor 4:17* For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, and he will remind you of my ways which are in Christ, just as I teach everywhere in every church.
 - **Paul knew Timothy’s demeanor as a father.** *Phil 2:20-22* For I have no one {else} of kindred spirit who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare. *21* For they all seek after their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus. *22* But you know of his proven worth that he served with me in the furtherance of the gospel like a child {serving} his father.
 - **Paul encouraged Timothy as a father.** *2 Tim 2:1* You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.
- Through the mentoring process of Paul’s activities, Timothy was taught to teach others to teach others also. Now imagine if they did this only once or twice a week. Do you think it would have turned out so good?
- When we take the time to have many Bible studies a week, it allows many other teachers to be developed. Congregations that have small group Bible study programs tend to develop many more teachers that those that do not. This is because the people always follow the need.
- *Matthew 9:37-38* Then He said to His disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few.”³⁸ “Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest.”
- If we will create more opportunities for teachers to develop, we will have more teachers to create more opportunity for teachers. Small group Bible studies will do such a thing.

VI) New Connections to the Lost

- Philemon 1-2 Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, To Philemon our beloved *brother* and fellow worker,² and to Apphia our sister, and to Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in your house:
- Paul wrote this letter during his first imprisonment in Rome around 62 AD. Apparently Timothy was with him at the time of the writing. It is a letter written to a Christian man named Philemon who had past gospel dealings with Paul. Apparently Philemon was one of Paul’s own converts as mentioned in verse 19 “...not to mention to you that you owe to me even your own self as well...”

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- Philemon 10-11 I appeal to you for my child Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my imprisonment, ¹¹ who formerly was useless to you, but now is useful both to you and to me.
- An examination of this writing exposes that Philemon had a slave named Onesimus that was exposed to Paul in the workings of the church that met in his house. Onesimus, being an unbelieving slave, stole from his master and ran off to Rome as a fugitive. While in Rome he heard about a familiar man named Paul, whom he had met through the small group home Bible studies in his master's house. Onesimus decides to visit him in prison and while there, was converted, making him a new brother in Christ.
- The point being was that Onesimus was an lost slave and met Paul through the Small Group Bible Study program that converted his own master in the process. We don't know how long it took, but that connection to Paul eventually led to his conversion hundreds of miles away in a foreign land.
- We must view the Small Group Bible Study Program as a means to connect to the lost of this world.

Those are just a few of the many benefits that we can continually have through this time-tested method of spreading God's word. If we will just keep our focus on the process, then many of these pluses will be ours.