

The Ten Commandments of Small Group Studies

Doug Hamilton

The Ten Commandments of What NOT to Do.

I) Thou shalt not meet for the sake of meeting.

- 1 Timothy 5:13 At the same time they also learn *to be* idle, as they go around from house to house; and not merely idle, but also gossips and busybodies, talking about things not proper *to mention*.
- Getting together can be a great thing, but getting together for the sake of getting together can lead to many bad things. If the purpose of getting together deviates from the task of education, the church will end up with nothing more than a group of clubs and social groups. We must communicate that the meetings have purpose and meaning by defining it up front. The goals of what is expected should be in the parameters of the mission plan. Thou shalt not meet for the sake of meeting.

II) Thou shalt not meet for the sake of eating.

- Luke 10:38-42 Now as they were traveling along, He entered a village; and a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home. ³⁹ She had a sister called Mary, who was seated at the Lord's feet, listening to His word. ⁴⁰ But Martha was distracted with all her preparations; and she came up *to Him* and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to do all the serving alone? Then tell her to help me." ⁴¹ But the Lord answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; ⁴² but *only* one thing is necessary, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her."
- Martha was busy preparing the meal for the people, but Mary was taking in the lesson that Jesus was teaching to the group. There was nothing wrong with preparing a meal, but the "good part" about the small group home Bible study program was the teaching rather than the eating.
- There is nothing wrong with having a food fellowship at your small group, for the scripture says in *1 Corinthians 11:22 Do you not have houses in which to eat and drink?* It is when the small group home Bible study becomes the small group taste-testers that the problem emerges. Thou shalt not meet for the sake of eating.

III) Thou shalt not stray from the Truth.

- 2 John 9-11 Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son. ¹⁰ If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into *your* house, and do not give him a greeting; ¹¹ for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds.
- It only takes a couple of denominational thinkers in a group of weak teachers and the results could be catastrophic. We are only one generation away from apostasy from the truth. There must be a focus of the Bible as core in the small group home Bible studies. Thou shalt not stray from the Truth.

IV) Thou shalt not study without a conclusion in mind.

- 2 Timothy 3:5-7 it refers to a time when small group of false teachers that lead people further into sin through a process called "...*Ever learning, and never able to come to*

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the knowledge of the truth.” One of the failures in the small group home Bible studies is when there is not a defined time period and goal in mind.

- Often times we tend to stray away from the lesson plan and chase rabbits. The first century church was plagued with attempts of relativism with no definitive results. *1 Timothy 1:4 Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do.* Paul and Timothy faced difficulty with the Judaizers throwing them off the gospel path by chasing fruitless discussions. Thou shalt not study without a conclusion in mind.

V) Thou shalt not forget to reach into the lives of the church.

- In the effort to reach out to the lost, there are some that tend to forget there are problems in the lives of the saved. In fact we must always keep in mind that there are three types of people that come to the small group home Bible studies: 1) The “Saints”, 2) The “Faints” and 3) The “Aints”. The first two are among the saved, representing the practicing Christians and non-practicing Christians respectively.
- There must be an effort in the small group program to reach out to the needs of all the church members. Thou shalt not forget to reach into the lives of the church.

VI) Thou shalt not forget to reach out to the lost.

- Matthew 28:19-20 “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”
- As the studies progress, you will need to make sure that you are designing your small groups to reach out to the lost people in your life and the lives of those from the group. A good rule of thumb is to have at least one person in the group that still needs to obey the gospel.
- Recruit the Christians from the congregation with not only a learning opportunity, but a mission opportunity. One might invite with the idea, “There is a mission opportunity to reach out to some prospects. Would you consider coming to this study to lend a hand in conversion?” Thou shalt not forget to reach out to the lost with the small group home Bible studies.

VII) Thou shalt not forget to open up YOUR home.

- Mark 2:1-2 When He had come back to Capernaum several days afterward, it was heard that He was at home.² And many were gathered together, so that there was no longer room, not even near the door; and He was speaking the word to them.
- There was a short time in the ministry of Jesus that he had a home of His own. When He did live there the scripture says that he had many in the home and was “speaking the word to them”. It was such a success that by the end of the account, the people were tearing the roof off to enter. They had associated the ministry of Jesus with the home of Jesus.
- We need to have the principle that if we have been blessed with a home by God, then we all need to be able to open up that home for God. Thou shalt not forget to open up our own home for God.

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VIII) Thou shalt not forget to recruit assistance.

- Acts 6:1-4 Now at this time while the disciples were increasing *in number*, a complaint arose on the part of the Hellenistic *Jews* against the *native* Hebrews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving *of food*.² So the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, “It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables.”³ “Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task.”⁴ “But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”
- The apostles were the lead teachers in the small group home Bible study program. If the distractions were to continue, the ministry of the word would suffer and the growth of the church would become stagnant. The brought in some personal workers to stay on track and the church thrived.
- There will be a tendency of the more active members involved in teaching to take on more than they can handle. One of the pitfalls of the teachers routinely fall into is the distraction away from the teaching of the word of God. Teachers need to primarily focus on TEACHING! Recruit for assistance before it happens. Thou shalt not forget to recruit assistance.

IX) Thou shalt not be limited in the selection of teaching material

- We are told in Galatians 6:2 *Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ*. These burdens can be great! In our labors for the Lord, we will come across many problems that the church will face. They will have family issues with their money, employment, anger, loneliness, depression and many more. There will be needs to address those problems through education from God's word. If we fail to do that, then the problems end up being worse than they were in the beginning.
- Because there are so many different issues to deal with, we need to make sure they are many different topics from the Bible to deal with them. Thou shalt not be limited in the selection of teaching material.

X) Thou shalt not forget to train new teachers.

- The apostle Paul wrote 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*. There is an obligation to bring forth the next generation of teachers for the church.
- One of the things that works well in the small group home Bible study program is to always have an assistant teacher in the class. Their job is to first learn from the primary teacher. Once that is accomplished, taking a supervised lead role for the next class. Following that, they need to be taking the leading role in the teaching position with the intention of training the next teacher. If this pattern is followed, you will never run out of teachers to go with your material. Thou shalt not forget to train new teachers.