

10 Reasons Why Your Church Should Have Small Groups

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I used to be skeptical of small groups. I thought it was a bit too faddish, touchy-feely, and created Christian social clubs instead of fostering true discipleship. Maybe some small groups are guilty of these charges. However, on the whole, small groups are a valuable means of helping people in the church.

They go by different names—small groups, cell groups, care groups, discipleship, groups, grace groups, breakout groups. Whatever they are called, the basic idea is the same: a small gathering of people interested in spiritual growth. Here's why small groups are important.

1. **Small groups foster close relationships and integral community.** The small group atmosphere is ready-made for building friendships. People talk more in small groups of people. People are quick to recognize needs, and help to meet them. The relationships formed within small groups form a strong fabric within a church. Relationships that are formed outside of the (sometimes artificial) setting of a church service, are relationships that will endure and strengthen over time.
2. **Small groups provide a comfortable introduction for nonbelievers to the Christian faith.** I'm skeptical that "inviting people to church" is the best means of evangelism. Most of us tend to fear relationship-forming, especially when it involves sharing our faith with someone. That is a natural and understandable fear. Inviting someone instead to a small group meeting provides a way to involve a believer directly into a community of believers—watching them live out their faith, listening to them pray, hearing them share God's work in their life, and learning more about the Bible. The nonbeliever is more likely to ask questions, get answers, and form relationships with the believers. Small groups are a powerful missional tool, allowing for the greater spread of the gospel among nonbelievers in the community.
3. **Small groups provide an ideal way to care for the needs of people within the church.** When one believer in a small group is struggling financially, emotionally, spiritually, socially, etc., it is much easier for the members of the group to notice and provide help. The structure of a small group is essentially a community of believing friends. Friends should help one another, especially Christian friends.
4. **Small groups provide a way for Christians to live out their faith instead of merely hearing more preaching or teaching.** If Sunday morning is for listening, then the rest of the week is for living. Whether it's discussing the Sunday sermon,

talking about a spiritual battle, or simply praying for one another, small groups create a context for Christians to live out their faith in real life.

5. **Small groups participate in focused prayer for one another.** Prayer cannot be overrated, but it is often underpracticed. Small groups can better participate in prayer for one another. In one of my small group meetings, each of the people that were present took a few minutes to tell others about their particular challenges or concerns. Then, as soon as he was finished, the person right next to him took a minute or so to pray for him. Small groups make for great prayer meetings.
6. **Small groups provide a comfortable atmosphere for openness.** One thing I like about small groups is that we meet in homes. There are at least twenty-six references in the New Testament that talk about believers meeting in homes or being part of a household. (Not all are references in Acts: Romans 16:5; 1 Corinthians 16:19; Philemon 1:2). Homes are usually comfortable places—places devoid of pews, PA systems, and stages. They are places where people can open up, listen, learn, and grow.
7. **Small groups allow for mutual edification among believers.** It's easy to depend upon the professionals to give us our spiritual food. According to the Bible, God gives spiritual gifts to all believers, not just the guy who preaches on Sunday morning. These gifts are for the benefit of the whole church. Every Christian should minister to other Christians with his or her gifts. This happens most naturally, effectively, and purposefully in small groups. Plus, we start to realize that other believers face the same problems we do. Edification is at work.
8. **Small groups encourage better learning.** Listening to a sermon is a great way to learn the Word, but it is easy to become detached or daydream during a sermon. We become passive listeners. Not so in a small group. When a few people are together, every individual is expected to be involved and to participate. This active involvement is an effective way to learn better.
9. **Small groups provide a source of encouragement and accountability.** It's easy to slip in and out of church unnoticed. It's not just megachurches where this happens. In an average-sized church of 100 or 150, people may be coming each Sunday service, but not getting involved. These people may need accountability in their lives, encouragement in their walk with God, or help in some way. Small groups provide a way to better meet these needs.
10. **Small groups help to cultivate leadership within the church.** Someone has to lead a small group meeting, or at least facilitate the discussion. Unless your entire church *is* the small group (unlikely), there will need to be leaders other than the pastor. Thus, small groups give opportunities for leadership development within the church.