

## We Need Each Other

### Story:

#### **Becky backed out of her driveway.**

On the seat beside her was her Bible and a piece of paper with a few scribbled directions on how to get to the Wrights' house.

She was on her way to a small fellowship meeting that a friend at church had invited her to.

Arriving at her destination, Becky parked her car and sat for a few moments.

Thoughts whirled through her mind.

What would this group be like?

She was looking for some friends.

Becky had lost her husband several years before and now she needed some emotional support.

She also wanted to grow in her knowledge of the Bible.

She slid the keys out of her ignition, gathered her things and walked to the front door of the Wrights' home.

Norma Wright, opened the door and greeted Becky warmly.

Several others had already arrived and were enjoying a piece of pie and casual conversation in the living room. Introductions were made.

Maynard, Norma's husband invited Becky into the living room where the refreshments were being served. Other members of the group arrived, and after a few minutes the meeting began.

After a brief time of worship the group leader started by doing a ice-breaker time together by sharing some answers to some specific questions.

By the time these were shared Becky had forgotten her nervousness and was beginning to feel comfortable and excited to share a little about herself with the group.

As the small Group meeting was coming to an end, Becky was glad she had come.

The warmth and love she felt encouraged her.

The attitude toward God and the Scriptures was something she had wanted and so she wasn't disappointed.

Their care for one another led her to come to the conclusion that this group of people knew they needed each other.

I want you to believe with me this morning that we need each other.

God intended it to be that way.

He made us to be in relationship with Him and with each other.

Much of our spiritual growth is dependent upon the quality of such relationships.

This morning the purpose of what we are doing in this worship service is to show you how very important our spiritual walk with God is linked within the context of Small Groups of committed Christian Believers.

### **1. Belonging:**

Every one of us through our life process belongs to various small groups.

Each of us were born into a Small Group.

All of us have a need to belong.

Our security is often rooted in knowing that at least one other person loves and cares for us.

I've often thought if everyone else turned against me, as long as I had my wife and my children and their families, I could make it in life.

As we grow in our life process, our circle of interpersonal relationships grows, and we begin to think beyond our immediate family.

We have boy scouts and girl scouts

We have Little League

We have football and soccer

We have basketball and golf

We have fraternities in college

We have the church family

We have school meetings

We have hunting and fishing buddies

We have professional groups

And the list goes on and on.

Within the church, people also gather in all kinds of groups.

Tuesday night I was here at the church for a board meeting and the ladies group was meeting down the hall.

I went past the door and I heard one of the ladies, I won't mention her name talking about belly buttons, so I stuck my head in the door – cautiously, of course, and asked what was going on, and the ladies were having a good time laughing.

And my wife answered my question, by saying they were talking about the – how did you say it – “the uncomely parts of our bodies.”

Needless to say, I closed the door quickly and the ladies had a laugh on me, I heard one of them say, “Boy, did you see how red his face was?”

One of our Small Groups for Women only.

The purpose of our groups in the church varies, and my encouragement for every believer would be to join the one that fits with your gifts and goals.

But mostly people join a group or choose a group because they hope that some of their basic needs will be met: their need to know and to be known, to love and to be loved.

In I Corinthians chapter 13 we find what we refer to as the Love Chapter of the Bible.

Love is to be the hallmark of the every believer and small group in our church.

Let me give you an example: A group of young people who are growing in respect and love for each other as they study the Scriptures together and “ham it up” on the volleyball court is probably doing the ministry of the church more than the choir whose members don’t get along.

Now, please understand me, I’m not aware of any of that going on in the choir, I’m just using this as an example.

## 2. Why Small Groups?

Spiritual growth, like emotional growth, does not occur in a vacuum.

It comes as we relate to others in the body of Christ, His Church.

I have been in the church now for over 50 years and have come to the conclusion that many Christian believers fail to find spiritual stimulation and growth in their local church because – the traditional church today has failed to find the essential community that characterized the early church.

Several weeks ago I was reading Philemon and I want to read one verse to you as an example of what I am trying to prove to you.

I’ve read this, but I think most of us have missed the significance of this – watch this – pay close attention:

***Verse 1-2 “Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, To Philemon our beloved friend and fellow laborer,***

*To the beloved Apphia, Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in your house.*

Here is just one of many examples of the Church meeting in their home to grow in fellowship and spiritual maturity.

One of the best ways to learn and apply the Scriptures to our life is to study them with a small group.

In a Small Group we can encourage and help one another discover and obey God's Word in ways that are simply impossible when the whole church meets together on Sunday morning or Sunday evening.

God has made it possible for every believer to use their spiritual gifts and experiences that will contribute to the growth and maturing of others in their faith.

Small groups are the integral part of just about any church's life.

-- This is another sermon, but as the different parts of the Church body gathers together in Christian love we find security and encouragement.

-- We find also the Biblical mandate of submitting to Christ's leadership and to one another.

-- When this happens there can be tremendous results.

### **3. The church grows and upbuilds itself in Christian love.**

You see – the vital importance of fulfilling the Great Commission is found in the networking of all kinds of small groups within the church, doing various ministries, enabling the church to be spiritually healthy and grow, reaching the unsaved and the unchurched and making a difference in the world.

**The dynamics of Small Group ministries is the future of this church and it's spiritual vitality.**

Those who have participated in small groups within the context of the church experience bonding, encouragement, new friendships, and the list goes on and on.

### **4. God makes the Church. We don't.**

**We are the Body of Christ.**

There is no such thing as a lone-ranger Christianity.

Paul Tournier makes this point when he says there are two things we cannot do alone:

1. One is to be married
2. To be a Christian

The Apostle Peter explained it like this to his letter to the Church at Rome:

*“You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. Once you were no people but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy but now you have received mercy.”*  
***1 Peter 2:9-10***

Folks, here the message we must remember.

Remember where you came from in your life of sin.

Once we were *“no people.”*

Oh, believe me, some of us tried, but miserably failed.

The Good News is that now we have *“Received His mercy.”*

And we may agree intellectually and theologically that we are God’s people, but how do we experience this truth in our churches?

I want you to hear what I’m going to say. It may sound like I am minimizing the Sunday services, but I’m not.

One thing seems to be very clear in the Scriptures.

We don’t experience the fullness of Christian community in large group worship or at other large Christian gatherings.

But we do find it in Small Group settings.

And if our church is going to be a New Testament Church than we must have smaller group ministries – all kinds of varieties of small groups.

## **5. Small Groups in the Bible**

Jesus is our greatest example when the Gospels show us that He poured His life into 12 disciples, expecting that they would change the world. And they did!

If Jesus set forth the example for us to follow, wouldn’t we be foolish not to accept what Jesus showed us to do?

Jesus chose these twelve men and of course, there were women involved in Jesus’ groups, but He promised that their love for one another would make an impact on their society, causing others to believe in Him.

John 17:21-26 reads,

*21 that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. 22 I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may*

*be one as we are one: 23 I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. 24 "Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world. 25 "Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. 26 I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them."*

**In Acts chapter 1 Jesus turns His work over to the Christians; and they were to declare His Kingdom in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and “to the end of the earth.” Acts. 1:8**

So God chose us Christians to meet together so that the whole world might be blessed.

If we see as Christian believers the importance of this strategy of meeting together and attracting the unsaved and through our meeting together fulfilling the Great Commission – If we see that as reaching the lost and the unchurched – then brothers and sisters – we have a duty to be a part of it.

**Conclusion:**

I want to close giving you practical Advantages of Small Group Ministries within our church.

In his book, **The Problem with Wineskins**, Howard Snyder points to a number of advantages of a small group within the church.

### **1. It is flexible.**

The group can change its procedure readily and meet the needs of its members.

The group can change periodically.

### **2. It is mobile**

**You can meet in the church or in your home or even in a restaurant.**

You can meet at work, or even in an office.

Small Groups are not bound by a building, such as a church building.

Just think of three thousand people in Acts chapter 2 meeting in homes.

### **3. It is inclusive**

You're missed if you don't show up.

The small group is open to all types of people.

### **4. It is personal.**

The small group creates a place where you can share your needs and you can feel the support and encouragement of others who love and care for you.

## **5. It's risky**

A small group puts us at the edge of adventure in our Christian life.

As we discover ourselves and others through conflict, care and confrontation grows.

God works in our lives through others.

## **6. It's an excellent way to fulfill the Great Commission.**

True friendship of a small group will be noticed by those all around us.

If the church gets out of the four walls of the actual church building, then those outside will notice us.

**God is calling us to a great task as a church.**

**The church is not a holy place, but it is a holy people called by God to declare His mighty deeds to the world.**

**The practical nature of Small Groups is that it will reach a lost and dying world for Christ Jesus.**