

THE PURPOSE OF SMALL GROUPS

LOF4 - VISION

Last week we learnt about [GOD'S ANSWER AND VISION FOR THE BIG CHURCH DILEMMA](#). That as the church grows bigger in size..... It's even more important to maintain HEALTHY SMALL GROUP FELLOWSHIPS in order to ensure that:

- People's needs are being met
- Everyone will grow spiritually
- No burn-out will happen
- The message is always sharp and timely.

And hence.... For the church of God to sustain growth, and keep growing healthily and ensured everyone's being pastored.....

The answer / pathway for this is **SMALL GROUPS**.

Today we will go deeper to look into Biblical context and principles....

Why is SMALL GROUP so important?

When we understand the WHY..... it provides the **VISION** or the **DRIVING FORCE** behind every small group ministry..... and allows the leader to keep pressing on in spite of any obstacles.

I believe first and foremost.....JESUS Himself had modelled it for all of us during His time on earth, how He structured His life and His ministry.

EVEN JESUS NEEDED A SMALL GROUP!!

The Bible says **"it's not good for the man to be alone"**. (Gen 2:18)

This is not purely in the context of being single.....but more also, in the context of we can't do life alone.

The wrong perception was that if we're really mature, we don't need any friends.

- Only the weak need somebody.
- But that's not true!

Even Jesus had his TWELVE!! --- there of these were His intimate friends.

JESUS USED SMALL GROUPS AS HIS MODEL FOR MINISTRY

Jesus could have chosen ANY METHODS FOR HIS MINISTRY.....

- He could have transferred his ministry to one person that He had trained quite well.
- He could have refused all personal relationships, and concentrated on mass teaching only the Twelve.
- He could have chosen a different Twelve every year and multiplied his ministry by 36 rather than 12.
- He could have held classes for any wanting to attend.

But the fact is that Jesus chose **LONG-TERM, CLOSED, SMALL GROUP AS HIS PRIMARY STRATEGY FOR PERSONAL COMMUNITY AND MINISTRY!**

JESUS PLACED HIS HIGHEST PRIORITY ON HIS SMALL GROUP.

Jesus, who had the whole world to save.....made the Twelve His PRIORITY!

Matthew 13:10-11

The disciples came to him and asked, 'Why do you speak at the people in parables?' He replied, 'the knowledge of the secret of the kingdom of heaven have been given to you but not to them.'

HE DIED FOR ALL..... BUT HE LIVED FOR A FEW!

If Jesus Himself needed a small group community, He invested His life into his small group (The Twelve) and He birthed His whole ministry from the Twelve.... Shouldn't it also be the model that what we need to carry through...?

Let's look at some Biblical principles that highlight the Importance..... **THE PURPOSE OF SMALL GROUPS**....

1. CHRISTIANS NEED ENCOURAGEMENT

How many of you agree that in life, trouble will always come...

- There are times when we are doing well, killing it in life!
- There will also be times when we are down.... when trouble, a storm hit in our lives.
- Every now and then, **we as Christians need ENCOURAGEMENT as well in life.**

JOHN 14:1 "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me."

And this is where the first purpose of SMALL GROUPS come in.

WHEN WE'RE IN SMALL GROUPS, WE GET ENCOURAGED;

- WHEN ONE IS DEPRESSED OR DISCOURAGED..... THE GROUP MEETS REGULARLY (WEEKLY, FORTNIGHTLY).....AND WE ENCOURAGE EACH OTHER THROUGH PRAYER AND MINISTRY.

During pandemic times.....

Wow it's a rollercoaster life for some people..... some went through the darkest seasons of their lives

- *Got stood down, lost their income, got stuck away from family....*
- *Their family got sick / tested positive in Covid, they're all stressed worried.....*
- *Imagine doing that all ALONEEE!!*

In Connect Group, we can share our struggles, it's a safe place to open up, cry, pour out....

But also get encouraged.....

- *“Hey, Lets pray together.... Let’s believe that God will open doors... Let’s pray together for healing and protection!*
- *Hey, God has done this in your life, you’ve gone through this before remember? God can do it again this time??!!”*

There are people who continuously check on you.....how are you feeling / progressing..... and also celebrate together with you!!

IT’S ONE OF THE MOST BASIC HUMAN NEEDS....

- WE NEED **ENCOURAGEMENT** AND **SUPPORT** TO **GROW SPIRITUALLY**; THIS HAPPENS IN SMALL GROUPS.

THERE’S NOTHING MORE INTENTIONAL, MORE POWERFUL TO A CHRISTIAN LIFE..... THAN **SMALL GROUP THAT MEETS REGULARLY TO SHARE, PRAY AND ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER IN CHRIST?**

KNOWING THAT **YOU ARE NOT GOING THROUGH THINGS ALONE..... HAVING PEOPLE TO SHARE THE BURDEN WITH YOU..... LIFTED OFF SOME WORRY / DOUBT / WEIGHT OFF YOU.... AND ALSO PRAY TOGETHER WITH YOU!**

THE FACT IS **YOU CANNOT GROW IN THE LORD ALONE!!**

HEBREWS 10:24 (PHIL)

"Let us think of one another and how we can encourage each other to **love and do good deeds."**

WHAT BETTER PLACE IS THERE TO **RECEIVE ENCOURAGEMENT** IN THE **DEVELOPMENT OF OUR OWN GIFTS AND MINISTER TO THOSE WHO KNOW US BEST..... AND THOSE WHO ARE COMMITTED TO OUR GROWTH IN THE LORD?**

“HEY, YOU’RE SO GOOD IN HERE.... I THINK YOU SHOULD REALLY SERVE HERE!”

“HEY, I’M BLESSED BY YOUR MINISTRY, BY YOUR LIFE..... KEEP GOING, KEEP INSPIRING US”

We often see OUR SPIRITUAL GIFTS **FLOURISHED** and **DEVELOPED** firsthand through small groups, where we can literally use every opportunity to encourage people, to serve people with our gifts....and that’s actually the most effective way to growth.

2. CHRISTIANS NEED PROTECTION.

JOHN 16:1

"These things I have spoken to you, that you should not be made to stumble."

AS CHRISTIANS, WHILE WE GO TO CHURCHES BUT WE ARE STILL TEMPTED BY SIN. WE ARE ALL STILL ON OUR JOURNEY OF OUR WALK WITH GOD....

THE FACT IS, WE ARE ALL STILL WORK IN PROGRESS.

IF OUR LIVES ARE NOT ACCOUNTABLE TO OTHERS, SATAN MAY TRAP US EASILY.
ONE OF THE ENEMY'S BIGGEST STRATEGY IS THIS.....THE ISOLATION TRAP....

1 PETER 5:8

Be sober, be vigilant; because your opponent the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour

HE KNEW THAT IF HE CAN ISOLATE ANY CHRISTIANS....NO MATTER HOW STRONG YOU THINK YOU ARE.....YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO HANDLE HIS HARDEST SCHEME, ALONEEEEE....

- BOTTOMLINE IS, **WE ARE WEAK WHEN WE ARE ALONE**.....
- THE BIBLE SAYS BE ALERT, BE VIGILANT, BECAUSE WHEN YOU ARE ALONE, YOU ARE EASY TARGET TO BE ATTACKED.....THE ENEMY IS LIKE A ROARING LION SEEKING WHOM HE MAY DEVOUR....
- AND NORMALLY (*IF YOU WATCHED ANY DOCUMENTARY*), THEY WOULD TARGET **THE SICK, THE WEAK, THE YOUNG.....AND ALONE!! WHEN THERE'S NOBODY AROUND THEM TO PROTECT THEM!!**

WE ARE ONLY STRONGER WHEN WE ARE TOGETHER.

ECC 4:10

For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, for he has no one to help him up.

- **WHEN** HE FALLS (NOT "IF")
- *THAT MEANS MOST LIKELY NONE OF US IS EXCEPTED.... WE ALL WILL IN SOME WAY, IN SOME TIME....*
- BUT WHEN WE FALL.....
- WE HAVE PEOPLE TO HELP US UP
- WE HAVE PEOPLE TO HELP US PICK UP OUR BROKEN PIECES, AND REBUILD OUR LIFE
- WE HAVE PEOPLE WHO HELP US PRACTICALLY AND SPIRITUALLY TO OVERCOME!!

WE ALL HAVE **BLIND SLIDES**; HENCE, WE NEED OTHERS PROTECTING US.

PROVERBS 18:1

A man who isolates himself seeks his own desire; He rages against all wise judgment.

The Bible clearly tells us that there is Victory when we surround ourselves with wise counsel.... (Proverbs 24:6)

Become wise by walking with the wise; hang out with fools and watch your life fall to pieces. (Proverbs 13:20)

3. **CHRISTIANS NEED FELLOWSHIP** - THE POWER OF FELLOWSHIP IN SMALL GROUPS.

ACTS 2:42

And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.

FELLOWSHIP IS THE GREEK WORD FOR "KOINONIA",

- IT MEANS **A UNITY BROUGHT ABOUT BY THE HOLY SPIRIT**,
- IT IS A KNITTING OF HEARTS THAT TAKES PLACE WHEN WE GATHER IN HIS NAME,
- THE UNITY AND LOVE THAT COMES THROUGH A FELLOWSHIP IS VERY SUPERNATURAL.

"NOBODY IS CALLED TO DO LIFE ALONE.

TELL ME WHO YOUR FIVE CLOSEST FRIENDS ARE, AND I WILL TELL YOU WHERE YOU'RE HEADED!"

ONE OF THE PRIMARY REASONS FOR HAVING SMALL GROUPS IN A CHURCH IS FOR THE PURPOSE OF **FELLOWSHIP** - TO PROVIDE **A BIBLICAL ENVIRONMENT FOR MEMBERS TO BUILD SOLID RELATIONSHIPS**..... PEOPLE THAT WE DO LIFE TOGETHER WITH....

HEBREWS 10:25 (GNB)

"Let us not give up the habit of meeting together, as some are doing. Instead, let us encourage one another all the more, since you see the Day of the Lord is coming."

*I thank God that throughout the pandemic we as a church made a conscious decision to **keep the habit of meeting together.....through small groups!***

- *Yes the restriction might hinder us from corporate worship, but nothing still stops us from the habit of meeting and worship together in small group context.*
- *Imagine how down, how defeated, how isolated we would be now.....if that habit was not maintained.*
- *"Oh I'm gonna watch service online by myself.....in my own time....in my bedroom.... In my pyjamas"*
- *Give it a few weeks I believe we're gonna get be here today! Ha.*

There's something about us gathering together with another faith-filled people....rubbing shoulders.....in the same atmosphere.....

- *Hearing stories, testimonies from one another.....*
- *Being part of their journey to breakthrough and victory.....*
- *Somehow also strengthened us and lifted up our faith as well!*
- *Your faith is contagious.....Your fire is contagious!*

THE POWER OF FELLOWSHIP IN SMALL GROUPS

MATTHEW 18:19-20

"Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven.

For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them."

JESUS IS PRESENT WHEN WE FELLOWSHIP TOGETHER

- THERE IS A GREAT POWER WHEN PEOPLE PRAY TOGETHER:
- **THE PLACE OF AGREEMENT IS THE PLACE OF POWER!!**

WHEN AGREEMENT AND UNITY IS PRESENT, THE COMMANDED BLESSING IS SURE TO FOLLOW.

PSALM 133:1-3

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!

It is like the precious oil upon the head, running down on the beard, the beard of Aaron, running down on the edge of his garments.

It is like the dew of Hermon, descending upon the mountains of Zion; for there the Lord commanded the blessing life forevermore.

Where there is agreement and there is unity in the midst of the fellowship....

- God answers our prayers
- He commands blessings!

4. WE BELONG IN GOD'S FAMILY WITH OTHER BELIEVERS.

EPH 2:19 (TLB)

".... You are members of God's very own family, citizens of God's country, and you belong in God's household with every other Christian."

IF YOU READ THROUGH THE BIBLE..... YOU WILL OFTEN FIND THE BIBLE TALKS ABOUT CHRISTIANS AS **BROTHERS AND SISTERS.**

WELL, WE ALL HAVE THE SAME HEAVENLY FATHER: **GOD.**

- WE ARE **ONE FAMILY**.....

WE BELONG TO EACH OTHER!

YOU CANNOT RELATE TO JESUS CHRIST WITHOUT RELATING TO HIS PEOPLE.

"Oh, I belong to the universal, invisible Church!" --- if that were true then who is your invisible pastor, who is your family, and who are your elders and deacons?

Do you know the word "CHURCH" appears about 114 times in the Bible?

About 100 times, it's used in reference to local church --- a local gathering of believers!

ROMANS 12:5 (NIV)

"So in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others."

When we think about a family..... none of our family is perfect.

- *Just like our biological family....At times there might be disagreements or conflicts.....the same thing with our spiritual or God's family as well.....*
- *Even Jesus' disciples had conflict within them as well.....*
- *But you know what, it is the love of God that unite us,*
- *and also through conflicts is exactly how we practically grow to be more mature and learn to love one another, our family member.....like how God has loved us.*

FELLOWSHIP IS A WITNESS TO THE WORLD

JOHN 17:21 (TLB)

"My prayer for all of them is that they will be of one heart and mind, and the world will believe You sent Me." (Jesus praying)

OUR UNITY AND LOVING CARE FOR ONE ANOTHER IS A GREAT TESTIMONY OF GOD'S LOVE AND POWER.

FELLOWSHIP (KOINONIA) IS WHEN THE HOLY SPIRIT CONNECTS OUR HEARTS.

REMEMBER THAT THE WORLD IS A LONELY PLACE.

- EVERYBODY, LIKE THE WOMAN AT THE WELL, IS LOOKING FOR LOVE IN ALL THE WRONG PLACES.
- WHAT THEY'RE LOOKING FOR IS NOT FOUND IN ANY PLACE..... NOT IN ANY WORLDY MATERIALS, NOT IN ANY WORDLY FRIENDSHIPS...
..... BUT IN THE FAMILY OF GOD.

(STORY OF FARAH)

FELT LONELY ISOLATED DURING PANDEMIC ---- NONE OF HER FRIENDS REALLY EVEN REACHED OUT AND ASKED HOW SHE'S DOING, ONLY PEOPLE FROM THE CONNECT GROUP (THAT SHE KEPT REJECTING / AVOIDING BEFORE) THAT GENUINELY REACH OUT AND LOVE HER.

JOHN 13:35 (TLB)

"Your strong love for each other will prove to the world that you are My disciples."

5. WE NEED ACCOUNTABILITY TO GROW SPIRITUALLY

PROV 27:17 (GNB)

"People learn from one another, just as iron sharpens iron."

ACCOUNTABILITY IN DISCIPLESHIP HELPS US AS CHRISTIANS TO STAY ON TRACK WITH OUR PERSONAL AND SPIRITUAL LIFE BY CONFIDING IN OTHER CHRISTIANS FOR ENCOURAGEMENT AND DIRECTION.

ONE WAY TO HAVE ACCOUNTABILITY IN YOUR DISCIPLESHIP IS TO MEET REGULARLY WITH THE PERSON YOU ARE DISCIPLING / DISCIPLED UNDER.

- THAT'S WHY PID (PERSONAL INTENTIONAL DISCIPLESHIP) IS A BIG THING IN THE MOVEMENT CHURCH!
- IN THIS REGULAR MEETING - YOU FIND OUT WHERE THEY ARE SPIRITUALLY, ALSO HEALTH-CHECK ON THE OTHER ASPECTS OF THEIR LIFE..... AND FOLLOW-UP ON HOW THEY ARE DOING WITH ANY PAST STRUGGLES.

HEBREWS 3:13 (JB)

"Every day..... Keep encouraging one another so that none of you is hardened by the glamour of sin."

WE REALLY HAVE TO ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER SO WE DON'T GET TRAPPED BY THE GLAMOUR OF SIN.

JAMES 1:15

Lust gets pregnant, and has a baby: Sin!

Sin grows up to adulthood, and becomes a real killer.

Sin is glamorous..... outwardly, it smells good, it tastes good!
But it's a real killer!

ACCOUNTABILITY IS 2-WAYS.

- ACCOUNTABILITY PARTNER IS NOT LIKE ANY CHRISTIAN FRIENDSHIPS.
- THIS IS THE ONE, OR FEW PEOPLE --- LEADERS, PASTOR, MENTOR, OLDER PERSON THAT YOU LOOK UP TO, YOU VALUE AND RESPECT.
- SOMEONE THAT YOU'VE ALREADY BUILT RELATIONSHIP WITH, TO ALLOW A SPACE WHERE HONESTY AND CONFESSION OF SINS CAN TAKE PLACE SAFELY.
- THEY MODEL THE GODLY LIVING WITH INTEGRITY AND WISDOM.
- AND THEY HAVE ACCESS TO REBUKE, REPROVE YOU WHILE WILLING TO ENCOURAGE YOU IN GOD'S WORD.

ACCOUNTABILITY IN DISCIPLESHIP IS ONE BIG ASPECT IN MATURING IN OUR JOURNEY WITH GOD SPIRITUALLY, BUT ALSO LEARNING FROM WISDOM AND EXPERIENCE OF THOSE AHEAD OF US.

THERE ARE 50 "ONE ANOTHER" IN THE NEW TESTAMENT!

- INSTRUCTING US TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER...
- PRAY FOR ONE ANOTHER...
- ACCEPT ONE ANOTHER... (ROM 15:7)
- HONOUR ONE ANOTHER
- SERVE ONE ANOTHER

- EDIFY ONE ANOTHER (1 THESS 5:11)
- FORGIVE ONE ANOTHER (EPH 4:32)
- SUBMIT TO ONE ANOTHER
- BEAR ONE ANOTHER'S BURDENS...AND SO ON....

THESE SHOWS THE IMPORTANCE OF SMALL GROUP AS THE PLACE WHERE WE EXPERIENCE ALL THESE "ONE ANOTHER'S"

THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS A "LONE RANGER" CHRISTIAN LIVING IN THE BIBLE!!

SO CHURCH.... BIBLICALLY THIS IS WHY JESUS MODELLED A CHRISTIAN LIVING THROUGH SMALL GROUPS:

1. CHRISTIANS NEED ENCOURAGEMENT
2. CHRISTIANS NEED PROTECTION
3. CHRISTIANS NEED FELLOWSHIP
4. WE BELONG IN GOD'S FAMILY WITH OTHER BELIEVERS
5. WE NEED ACCOUNTABILITY TO GROW SPIRITUALLY

WITH THESE "WHY'S" IN MIND.....

LET US BE MORE INTENTIONAL WHEN IT COMES TO LEADING OUR SMALL GROUPS, OR INTENTIONALLY ROOTING OURSELVES INTO A HEALTHY FAMILY WHERE WE WOULD DO LIFE TOGETHER WITH, SERVE AND GROW TOGETHER.

DISCUSSION GUIDELINE

JESUS HAD MODELLED SMALL GROUPS AS HIS PRIMARY STRATEGY FOR PERSONAL COMMUNITY AND MINISTRY WITH THE PURPOSE OF BELOW:

- 1) CHRISTIANS NEED ENCOURAGEMENT
- 2) CHRISTIANS NEED PROTECTION
- 3) CHRISTIANS NEED FELLOWSHIP
- 4) WE BELONG IN GOD'S FAMILY WITH OTHER BELIEVERS
- 5) WE NEED ACCOUNTABILITY TO GROW SPIRITUALLY

- FROM YOUR OWN JOURNEY / EXPERIENCE, HOW DID SMALL GROUPS HELP BUILD AND GROW YOU IN YOUR JOURNEY OF MATURING IN GOD?
- IN WHICH WAY CAN YOU HELP BUILD MORE & EDIFY THE CHURCH IN THE CONTEXT OF SMALL GROUPS?
- EVALUATE YOUR LIFE & SHARE WHETHER YOU'VE GOT ACCOUNTABILITY PARTNER IN YOUR SPIRITUAL JOURNEY, AND HOW ACCOUNTABILITY HAS PROPELLED YOU IN YOUR GROWTH?