

Making Friends for God:

Lesson #10 — An Exciting Way to Get Involved

Memory Verse

Matthew 9:37, 38, (NKJV) “*Then He said to His disciples, ‘The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest’*”

God has created us for fellowship. We are social beings, and as with exercise it is true with many things in life: we do better if we have a social support system. This is especially true in spiritual matters.

Small Groups: God’s Idea First

Matthew 18:20 (NKJV) *For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.”*

Small groups were God’s idea first. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit participated in Creation together. **Abraham and his household.**

Genesis 1:1–2 (NKJV) *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.² The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.* **Elijah and Elisha talking about God in upper rooms.**

Genesis 1:26 (NKJV) *Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”*

Hebrews 1:2 *has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;*

“The plan of salvation had its place in the counsels of the Infinite from all eternity”. — E.G. White, Fundamentals of Christian Education, p. 186

John 10:17–18 (NKJV) “*Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again.¹⁸ No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father.*”

Romans 8:11 (NKJV) *But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.*

1 Corinthians 15:15 (NKJV) *Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up—if in fact the dead do not rise.*

The smallest army unit, the squad, 7 to 14 soldiers led by a sergeant.

Small Groups in Scripture

Exodus 18:21–22 (NKJV) *Moreover you shall select from all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them to be rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens.²² And let them judge the people at all times. Then it will be that every great matter they shall bring to you, but every small matter they themselves shall judge. So it will be easier for you, for they will bear the burden with you.*

Luke 9:14–15 (NKJV) *For there were about five thousand men. Then He said to His disciples, “**Make them sit down in groups of fifty.**”¹⁵ And they did so, and made them all sit down.*

Mark 6:39–40 (NKJV) *Then He commanded them to make them all sit down in groups on the green grass. So they sat down in ranks, in hundreds and in fifties.*

1 Corinthians 14:40 (NKJV) *Let all things be done decently and in order.*

Organized for Service

1 Corinthians 12:12–26 (NKJV) *For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ.¹³ For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.¹⁴ For in fact the body is not one member but many.¹⁵ If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body,” is it therefore not of the body?¹⁶ And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body,” is it therefore not of the body?¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling?¹⁸ But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. ...²⁵ that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another.²⁶ And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.*

“The formation of small companies as a basis of Christian effort has been presented to me by One who cannot err. If there is a large number in the church, let the members be formed into small companies, to work not only for the church members, but for unbelievers. If in one place there are only two or three who know the truth, let them form themselves into a band of workers. Let them keep their bond of union unbroken, pressing together in love and unity, encouraging one another to advance, each gaining courage and strength from the assistance of the others”. — Test 7, pp. 21, 22.

New Testament Small Groups

Acts 18:1–5 (NKJV) After these things Paul departed from Athens and went to Corinth.² And he found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla (because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome); and he came to them.³ So, because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and worked; for by occupation they were tentmakers.⁴ And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks.⁵ When Silas and Timothy had come from Macedonia, Paul was compelled by the Spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus is the Christ.

Acts 20:1–3 (NKJV) After the uproar had ceased, Paul called the disciples to himself, embraced them, and departed to go to Macedonia.² Now when he had gone over that region and encouraged them with many words, he came to Greece³ and stayed three months. And when the Jews plotted against him as he was about to sail to Syria, he decided to return through Macedonia.

Notice how Luke mentions the names of Paul's co-workers.

Acts 12:11–13 (NKJV)¹¹ And when Peter had come to himself, he said, "Now I know for certain that the Lord has sent His angel, and has delivered me from the hand of Herod and from all the expectation of the Jewish people."¹² So, when he had considered this, he came to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose surname was Mark, where many were gathered together praying.¹³ And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a girl named Rhoda came to answer.

Small Group Dynamics

Acts 4:31 (NKJV) And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.

Acts 20:17–20 (NKJV) From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church.¹⁸ And when they had come to him, he said to them: "You know, from the first day that I came to Asia, in what manner I always lived among you,¹⁹ serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews;²⁰ how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house,

Acts 20:27–32 (NKJV) For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.²⁸ Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.²⁹ For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among

you, not sparing the flock.³⁰ Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.³¹ Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.

Matthew 9:37–38 (NKJV) Then He said to His disciples, "*The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few.*³⁸ Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest."

Reasons For Small Groups

1. Personal Growth -

First, personal discovery happens in small groups better than large groups for a number of reasons. You can learn, ask questions, involve yourself in the lives of others, and generally make yourself vulnerable among other people who are doing the same in small groups.

You just can't do that in sermons. There is no conversation, no feedback, and no questions. There's no room to challenge the preacher or even question any part of what's being taught. Spiritual growth happens better with others, in community, with open lines of communication and freedom to speak into one another's lives.

2. Smaller Communities Are More Cohesive

Second smaller groups act more like cohesive communities. Intimacy easily lost as numbers grow. You simply cannot know everyone beyond a certain point, and you certainly will not open up about your struggles and sins in a large group of people you don't know.

3. Deeper Friendships

With that in mind, the third factor is that small groups deliver deeper friendships that double as *accountability*. When people know you, really know you, your life becomes far more transparent, including your sin. Others learn to read you and will call you out, lovingly we hope, for those sins, creating opportunities to deal with real life difficulties as they surface. This is part of what we should expect from good friends.

4. Maximum Participation

Finally, small groups deliver maximum participation. People can hide in a big group without getting involved. Small groups have opportunities to discuss the issues with others in the church. Church life issues can be more openly discussed among trusted friends.

Mission can be planned and participated in together. Lives are sharpened and leaders developed. Small groups are an absolute necessity for involving as many people as possible in the life and ministry of your church.