

Overview:

The internet is chock-full of “self-help” and “how-to” type videos, blogs, articles and podcasts. Life coaches, social media influencers, celebrity preachers and even Christian “experts” have theories on everything. There are theories from self-care to social responsibility, from new life hacks to becoming a millionaire. What is often overlooked is the need to come back to the basics — to be men and women of the Word of God. We need to be convinced that the Word has the answers we need for life’s problems and mysteries. We need to be committed to studying and obeying the Word. We need to be people who seek, first and foremost, to see life through the lens found in the Truth of Jesus, who is the Word of God.

Outline:**I. Understand its Origin**

- A. The Word is inspired by God (2 Tim. 3:16)
 - 1. Carried along by Spirit (2 Peter 1:21)
 - 2. Word of God, not man (1 Thess. 2:13)
- B. Stands Forever (Psalm 119:89, Matt. 24:35)

II. Understand its Power

- A. The Word is like a sword.
 - 1. Penetrates, divides, judges (Hebr. 4:12)
 - 2. Sword of the Spirit (Ephesians 6:17)
- B. God’s Word created everything.
 - 1. “And God said...” (Genesis 1:3)
 - 2. “Through Him all things...” (John 1:1-4)
- C. Living for The Word could cost you.
 - 1. Persecution (Acts 5:40-41)
 - 2. Martyrdom (Revelation 20:4b)

III. Understand its Blessing

- A. Power to save (James 1:21, 1 Peter 1:23)
- B. Gives wisdom (Psalm 19:7, Proverbs 1:1-7, Jeremiah 8:9, 2 Timothy 3:15)
- C. Grows your faith (Romans 10:17)
- D. Protects you (Proverbs 30:5)
- E. Teaches, reproves, corrects, trains, equips for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

IV. Committed to Study/Memorize

- A. Daily Bread (Job 23:12, Acts 17:11)
 - 1. Have a plan to read everyday.
 - a. The One Year, Bible app plans, etc.

- 2. Stick to the plan

- 3. S.O.A.P.

B. Memorize

- 1. Jesus memorized Scripture (Matt. 4:4)
- 2. Helps fight sin (Psalm 119:11)
- 3. Renews and transforms (Romans 12:2)

C. Study in depth

- 1. Ezra was devoted to study (Ezra 7:10)
- 2. Accurately understand (2 Timothy 2:15)

V. Committed to Obey

- A. Do what the Word says. (James 1:22-25)
 - 1. Abraham heard the Word of God and went (Genesis 12:1-4)
 - 2. Saul to Paul (Acts 9)
 - a. Paul obeyed Jesus
 - b. Ananias obeyed Jesus
- B. Love completed (1 John 2:5-6, John 14:15)

VI. Committed to Teach/Share

- A. Use the Word to disciple others.
 - 1. Paul discipled Timothy (2 Timothy 2:2)
 - 2. Jesus taught using Scripture (Matt. 19:4-6, Matt. 22:29)
- B. Use the Word for evangelism.
 - 1. Paul reasoned with scripture (Acts 17:2)
- C. Washing loved ones with the Word (Eph. 5:25-26, Deut. 11:18-21)

Supporting Material:

Verses:

2 Tim. 3:16-17 “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”

2 Peter 1:21 “For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”

1 Thess. 2:13 “... when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God...”

Hebrews 4:12 “For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”

John 1:1-4 “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men.” Forever, O LORD, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens.”

Matthew 24:35 “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.”

Jeremiah 15:16 “Your words were found, and I ate them, and your

words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart, for I am called by your name, O LORD, God of hosts.”

Revelation 20:4b “Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God...”

James 1:21 “So get rid of all the filth and evil in your lives, and humbly accept the word God has planted in your hearts, for it has the power to save your souls.”

1 Peter 1:23 “since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God;”

Psalms 19:7 “The instructions of the LORD are perfect, reviving the soul. The decrees of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple.”

Jeremiah 8:9 “The wise men shall be put to shame; they shall be dismayed and taken; behold, they have rejected the word of the LORD, so what wisdom is in them?”

2 Tim. 3:15 “You have been taught the holy Scriptures from childhood, and they have given you the wisdom to receive the salvation that comes by trusting in Christ Jesus.”

Romans 10:17 “So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.”

Proverbs 30:5 “Every word of God proves true; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him.”

Ezra 7:10 “For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the LORD, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel.”

Quotes:

“All things desirable to men are contained in the Bible.”
-Abraham Lincoln

“A thorough knowledge of the Bible is worth more than a college education.”
-Theodore Roosevelt

“I am sorry for men who do not read the Bible every day. I wonder why they deprive themselves of the strength and the pleasure.”
-Woodrow Wilson

“Sin will keep you from this book. This book will keep you from sin.”
-D.L. Moody

“The Bible is alive, it speaks to me. It has feet, it runs after me. It has hands, it lays hold of me.”
-Martin Luther

Resources:

trc.life/bibleresources

Paul Carter, *What Did Jesus Believe About the Bible?*, The Gospel Coalition, 2017

The Bible Project,
thebibleproject.com

Discussion:

1. What obstacle is keeping you from reading the Bible more?
2. Share a time God personally spoke to you, through His Word.
3. What do you do when a certain Scripture doesn't sit well with you?

DISCIPLESHIP – PART 2

Influential and Others Focused

Overview:

Discipleship is influence. And no matter what season of life is we may be in, each one of us will have an influence on others. From the most extroverted and outgoing, to the most introverted and anti-social (whether we like it or not) we are all influential people. Additionally, discipleship is lived out by making our lives available for the benefit of others. Living a life that is *others-focused* is a life that walks in the steps of our great Savior, Jesus Christ.

I. We are Influenced & Influencers

- a. We are influenced by the people we surround ourselves with. (*Ex. Friends peers, parents.* Their hobbies, interests and passions will influence us.)
- b. We have an influence on those who surround themselves with our company. (*Ex. Friends, neighbors, children.* Our passions and interests will influence others.)

See: 1 Cor. 15:33, Pro 13:20, 22:6,24-25

- c. Our #1 influence = Jesus
- d. Disciples of Jesus should make every effort to be a godly influence on others.
 - i. At church: worship, Bibles, conversations
 - ii. At work: speech, conduct
 - iii. At home: parenting, community
 - iv. Social media

See Matt. 28:19-20, John 10:4, 2 Tim. 2:2

II. Discipleship is *Others-Focused*

- a. Be present in the lives of others. (Heb. 10:25)
- b. Be mindful of the interests of others. (Phil 2:4)
- c. At Church: Be filled up and ready to pour out into others.
- d. Me Focused = *Bad*
 - i. Late, get the best parking spot
 - ii. Impatience in coffee line
 - iii. 'Protecting' seats
 - iv. Leaving early to 'beat the rush'
 - v. Avoiding fellowship after service
- e. Others Focused = *Good*
 - i. Show up on time, or even early!
 - ii. Park further away for guests
 - iii. Three Before Me, help others find seats, invite others to sit with you
 - iv. Plan to stay and talk with others after service

DISCIPLESHIP – PART 2

Influential and Others Focused

Supporting Material:

Verses:

Proverbs 13:20 “Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm.”

Proverbs 22:6 “Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.”

Proverbs 22:24-25 “Make no friendship with a man given to anger, nor go with a wrathful man, lest you learn his ways and entangle yourself in a snare.”

Matthew 28:19-20 “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.”

John 10:4 “When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice”

1 Corinthians 15:33 “Do not be deceived: “Bad company ruins good morals.”

Philippians 2:4 “Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.”

1 Timothy 4:12 “Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.”

2 Timothy 2:2 “and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men.”

Hebrews 10:25 “Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.”

Quotes:

“If you think you're too small to influence others, you haven't spent the night with a mosquito.”

– *African Proverb*

“Thriving churches have the Great Commission as the centerpiece of their vision, while dying churches have forgotten the clear command of Christ.”

– *Thom S. Rainer*

“If you are going to make disciples, you need to be putting your faith into practice so that the people around you can imitate your faith.”

– *Francis Chan*

Discussion Questions:

1. In what ways were you influenced by others growing up? (*Music/ Career/ Hobbies*)

2. Think about the people in your life that have greatly influenced you in Christ. In what ways did they help you to grow in your faith?

3. In what ways have you used your influence to help others grow in their faith in Jesus?

4. Are there any people that come to mind when you think about who you can influence and disciple? Pray that God will give you more opportunities to do so.

5. What are some practical ways that you can be more “others-focused”?

Notes:

Overview:

Small groups are the heartbeat of our church. Some small groups will study the Bible while others will read a Christian book or participate in a video series together. Regardless, all of these small groups will need good, Godly leadership to succeed. As a leader, knowing your Bible and having Christlike character are clearly important factors. But there are also a number of skills which go a long way in effectively leading a small group. Here are five to consider.

Outline:

I. Communicate early and often, and then follow through.

- A. Reminders during the week
 1. Time, Place, topic, treats
 2. People forget, are lazy, get busy
 3. Use social media (i.e. Call, Facebook, Email, PCO, Group Me, etc.)
- B. Communicate expectations clearly
 1. Respect people's time (start & stop on time)
 2. Be consistent (dates, flow of meeting)
 3. Allow participation (location, treats, prayer, etc.)

II. Think through your meeting ahead of time.

- A. Know the "condition of your flock" (Pr. 27:23)
- B. Prepare Discussion Questions
 1. Not too hard, not too easy
 2. Ask probing questions-get to the heart
 - a. Not: "Do you agree with this statement?"
 - b. Ask questions like:
 - What is one thing you want to see change in your life as a result of this study?
 - What new promise can you take with you into the week?
 - What did you learn about God?
 - Where have you seen these things lived out well?
 - How does this relate to the Cross?
 - How does this resemble our church for good or for bad?
 - Where is this a struggle for you in your marriage?
 - What do you have a hard time believing in God's Word?
 3. Remember: Discussion is key, not just 'right' answer.

III. Be mindful of group dynamics.

- A. Foster warm, welcoming environment
 1. Be aware of new people (Intros/Ice breaker)
 2. Give clear direction for hangout time, treats, start/end time, etc. (*Ex. 20 mins of treats at start & end on time!*)
- B. Include everyone in discussion (it's hard!)
 1. Careful not to embarrass
 2. Ask quiet members directly
 3. Don't let someone dominate (You)! How?
 - Let me see if anyone else has thoughts...
 - OK, good thoughts. Let's press on...
 - Might need to pull them aside afterwards
- C. Be sensitive to the mood of the group
 1. Be a shepherd: Is there hurt, confusion, sadness or frustration that needs to be addressed?

IV. Know how to handle conflict.

- A. Angry conflict is rare, but it does happen. Here are some of the things you may want to say in the midst of disagreement:
 - "Sam, it sounds like you are trying to say XYZ. Am I hearing you correctly?"
 - "Amanda has offered a different view point. What do the rest of you think? How should we interpret this verse?"
 - "I know it's hard to talk about such a controversial or painful topic, but I don't think we should we run away from constructive conflict. I'd love to hear what everyone else is thinking."
 - "This is an important discussion, but it's not really involving the whole group. It would be great if the two of you could get together and continue the conversation at a different time."
 - "It sounds like I may have done something to upset you. Why don't we talk about it after the meeting is done?"
 - "Guys, I'm happy for us have disagreement in this group. But that sounded personal. Let's try to be gentle even when we are passionate."
- B. May have to shut down conversation when:
 1. Explicitly correct a wrong interpretation.
 2. Gently warn/reprove someone for continuing to speak in a harsh and unedifying way.
 3. NOTE: Don't be angry (will inflame)... or passive.

V. Plan for prayer & a spiritual dimension.

- A. Don't expect spirituality to just happen-lead out!
- B. Leading spiritually takes intentional planning:
 1. Are you going to ask for prayer requests?
 2. Consider having someone open with a Bible verse.
 3. Ask, "Who got to apply something last week?"
 4. What are prayer requests from previous weeks that need follow up? (*idea: SG Prayer volunteer-email*)
 5. How long do you want the prayer to be?
 6. How many people are you hoping will pray?
 7. Don't be afraid to call on certain individuals to share.
 8. Remind people that prayers can/should be short.
 9. Guide people through different spiritual topics (QT's, challenges, family, church, nation, world, etc.).
 10. Consider setting aside a meeting every few months for nothing but prayer & sharing. (*Ex. Mr. Dice*)

Conclusion

The biggest difference between a Small Group that is spiritually, relationally, and Biblically edifying and one that feels like an awkward waste of time, is leadership. Good leaders do not always get good followers. But, it almost never happens that you get good Small Groups without faithful, wise, skilled men and women to lead them.

Supporting Material:

Important Verses:

SMALL GROUP FOCUS

Proverbs 27:23a

"Be sure you know the condition of your flocks..."

Proverbs 25:2

"It is the glory of God to conceal a matter; to search out a matter is the glory of kings."

Psalms 133

"Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity! [a] It is like the precious oil on the head, running down on the beard, on the beard of Aaron, running down on the collar of his robes! It is like the dew of Hermon, which falls on the mountains of Zion! For there the Lord has commanded the blessing, life forevermore."

Ephesians 4:15-16

"Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love."

Hebrews 3:12-14

"Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end."

Hebrews 10:24-25

"And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near."

Matthew 18:20

"For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them." – Jesus

Acts 2:42-47

"And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved."

Acts 5:42

"And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus."

John 13:34-35

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." – Jesus

Galatians 6:1-2

"Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ."

1 John 4:11-13

"Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit."

Quotes:

"The same process that makes AA so effective—the power of a group to teach individuals how to believe—happens whenever people come together to help one another change. Belief is easier when it occurs within a community."
— Charles Duhigg

"Confession is a difficult discipline for us, because we all too often view the believing community as a fellowship of sinners before we see it as a fellowship of saints. We feel that everyone else has advanced so far into holiness that we are isolated and alone in our sin."
— Richard J Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*

"Membership in small groups allows people to feel similar and different at the same time: similar because they are a part of a group in different because the group is separate from the masses."
— Alexandra Robbins, *The Geeks Shall Inherit the Earth: Popularity, Quirk Theory and Why Outsiders Thrive After High School*

"So often, it's others around us who can see where God wants to grow us even before we see it ourselves."
— James MacDonald, *Christ-Centered Biblical Counseling: Changing Lives with God's Changeless*

Francis Chan Quotes on Community:

"God wants you to view other Christians in your life as partners in ministry. God has not called you to make disciples in isolation."
— *Multiply*

"The Spirit desires to use us when our hearts are aligned with (His) vision, when we are filled with genuine love for the church, and when we desire to see the church grow in love for God and others."
— *Forgotten God*

"The concept of downsizing so that others might upgrade is biblical, beautiful...and nearly unheard of."
— *Crazy Love*

"Out of 114 times that the "church" is mentioned in the New Testament, at least ninety of them refer to specific local gatherings of believers who have banded together for fellowship and mission."
— *Multiply*

"On a scale of one to ten, how much do you love the church? As you look around at your brothers and sisters in Christ, do you think to yourself, "I love these people so much. I pray God empowers me in some way to encourage these people toward a deeper walk with Him?"
— *Forgotten God*

Resources:

Right Now Media

www.rightnowmedia.org
Bible & Video Studies for Small Groups. Great selection of studies from leaders like Craig Groeschel, Francis Chan & more.

Lifeway.com

Many good resources for Small Groups

Resources at GroupLeaders.org:

These are Small Group resources from North Point ministries (Andy Stanley).

Small Group Studies from Saddleback:

Rick Warren's Saddleback (pastors.com) is a great example of what happens when churches are fueled by good Small Groups.

smallgroups.com

Many great Bible study resources. Motto: "Everything you need know to for small groups."

BluefishTV.com Small Group Studies:

Bluefish TV also specializes in video-based ministry resources and has a library of DVD-driven curriculum.

GospelPublishing.com SG Studies:

Solid selection of Small Group studies for spiritual growth, marriage, men, women etc.

Francis Chan Books:

Multiply, Crazy Love, Forgotten God

Discussion Questions:

1. How have Small Groups had a positive impact in your life?
2. Describe the best Small Group experience you have ever had (either as a participant or leader)? What made it special or meaningful?
3. Of these five Small Group leadership skills mentioned above, which one is the hardest for you? Which is the easiest?