

# Why Small Groups? Part 3

Growth & Fellowship

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## Intro:

The church's role (what it does) is dependent on its character (what it is) as a community of believers... This "character oriented" perspective is totally foreign to our "achievement oriented" society, however, where we look at what people do rather than who they really are." *Chuck Colson, The Body*

The Goal of Care Groups at Crossway: "Care, Growth, & Fellowship"

## I. CARE GROUPS & PROGRESSIVE SANCTIFICATION

Our small groups exist to serve the Biblical purpose of "Sanctification"

### A. What is Sanctification?

1. *Being conformed into the likeness of Christ*

Read Rom.8:28-30

"A progressive work of God and man that makes us more and more free from sin, and like Christ in our actual lives." Wayne Grudem

Phil.2:13

2. *Must distinguish between Justification & Sanctification*

Justification – "Instantaneous legal act of God in which he thinks of our sins as forgiven and Christ's righteousness as belonging to us, and declares us righteous in His sight." Grudem

"You will never be more justified than you are at this moment, because justification is an act of God. But by God's grace, you will become ever more sanctified as you cooperate with God's Spirit in the process of change." C.J. Mahaney, "Why Small Groups," p.5

3. *Sanctification is a mostly corporate process!*

"It is both foolish and wicked to suppose that we will make much progress in sanctification if we isolate ourselves from the visible church." R.C. Sproul, *The Souls Quest for God*, p.151

“The Christian life is inescapably corporate.” Bruce Miline

## B. Sanctification Happens Through Relationships

### 1. *Relationships are a context for exposing my sin?*

Prov.27:17

“Our transformation is worked out within the family of God. This is not necessarily the simpler way: being involved with other people can be inefficient, complicated, and time consuming. So many things can go wrong in relationships. But this is why community is such a big part of God’s plan to transform us into the image of Christ... As isolated individuals, we cannot reach the level of maturity that God has designed for us. This fullness happens as we live in a loving, redemptive community with one another, as we struggle together, and as we grow together.” *Paul Tripp, How Christ Changes Us By His Grace, JBC, Spring 2005*

### 2. *Relationships require sacrifice & putting to death our self-absorption*

## C. Care Groups And The Application Of Scripture

Read James 1:22-25

### 1. *The mirror alone is not sufficient for change, action is required!*

- Scripture is the mirror & shows us what we need to do, we must obey it!
- If we hear & see but do not obey we become deceived
- Just looking in the mirror won’t change you, neither will knowledge without application!
- The Word is like a mirror, but sometimes we need others

### 2. *Small Groups are designed for application*

## II. CARE GROUPS & BIBLICAL FELLOWSHIP

### A. What Fellowship is not

### B. Fellowship is a uniquely Christian experience!

1. *The word for “fellowship” in the Bible is “koinonia” in the Greek*

Translated as fellowship, “participation or sharing”

It’s a participation & sharing in something on the deepest level of human relationship, “our experience & current relationship with God Himself

John Loftness defines Fellowship “as participating together in the life and truth made possible by the Holy Spirit through our union with Christ.” *Why Small Groups, chapter 2*

2. *Biblical Fellowship Starts With God & flows to honest, transparent relationships*

Read I Jn.1:3

3. *Sin hinders our relationship with God and with one another*

Read I Jn.1:5-10

4. *Genuine fellowship with one another is first based upon fellowship with God through His Son*

5. *Then it involves honest, open, relationship with one another, rooted in the truth*

“Those first Christians of Acts 2 were not devoting themselves to social activities but to a relationship—a relationship that consisted of sharing together the very life of God, through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. They understood that they had entered this relationship by faith in Jesus Christ, not by joining an organization. And they realized that their fellowship with God logically brought them into fellowship with one another. Through their union with Christ they were formed into a spiritually organic community. We must grasp the idea that fellowship means belonging to one another in the Body of Christ, along with all the privileges and responsibilities that such a relationship entails.” Jerry Bridges, *True Fellowship* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1985, p.194)

### C. Biblical Fellowship In Care Group Involves:

1. Worshiping together, praying together & for one another
2. Sharing your weakness’, fears, struggles, burdens

3. Sharing spiritual experiences, illumination, convictions
4. Speaking the truth in love to one another (Eph.4:15)
  - ◆ Can mean bringing a simple observation, concern, or perception  
Proverbs 27:5-6
  - ◆ Sometimes it means confronting someone in sin (Mt.18:15-17)
5. Carrying one another's burdens (Gal.6:1-2) – involves restoring someone in sin
6. Having a Commitment to Resolve Conflicts Biblically
7. Encouraging one another (Heb.10:24)
8. Confessing your sins one to another (James 5:16)

“Confession alone makes deep fellowship possible, and the lack of it explains much of the superficial quality so commonly found in our church associations.”  
Dallas Willard, *Spiritual Disciplines*

Hindrances to Biblical Fellowship from J.I. Packer (God's Words, IVP 1981)

- ◆ Self-sufficiency
- ◆ Formality – unconscious rules & standards, lack of spontaneity
- ◆ Bitterness – unforgiveness, jealousy, offense, gossip & slander
- ◆ Elitism – toward those perceived as less mature, or just different

Fellowship is not something forced upon you – You must desire it, initiate it, & be devoted to it!

**The Way Forward:**

1. Devote yourself to building up & being built into the local church
2. Devote yourself to making your care group leader and your care group a success
3. Read the Care Group Member Job Description
4. Make every effort to be faithful & communicate with your Care Group Leader
5. Care Group is not about hanging with or making best friends with those in your group
6. It's being intentional to care for & serve, to be real & not superficial
7. Intentionally pursue “Care, Spiritual Growth, & Biblical Fellowship” with those assigned in your care group right away