**Week of 09-12-2021**



**SBSG – First Session (this session is different than the regular sessions)**

**Why Small Groups? – READ**

The purpose of a small group is to actively pursue Christ through grace filled relationships, as the small groups worship, serve, and “belong” together.

God created Adam and Eve, they were naked and not ashamed. Gen 2:25. Once they chose to live outside what God had created for them, they recognized their nakedness, and they hid. Gen 3:8. At first humankind had nothing to hide now we do. So, nakedness symbolizes our true self…now we’re not talking about taking your clothes off kind of nakedness…it’s a metaphor. We’re talking about the emotional clothes that we wear.

For many of us we hide from each other…we hide from the ones we love, we hide from co-workers, we hide from each other. This hiding from each other keeps us from living into our true authentic selves.

For some of us we hide from each other by hiding our mistakes with perfectionism. This behavior keeps us from being true to who we are.

The reason we do this is we fear judgement from others. Our secrecy and hiding are the basic cause of human suffering. True love and acceptance regardless of our behavior is the only foundation to true relationship.

The founder of Methodism John Wesley knew this about human behavior and sought to remedy it by creating what he called Class Meetings. They met in small groups during the week to basically ask the question, “how is it with your soul.” In other words…share how you are doing…not lies of perfection…but truth. And each person got a chance to share together. These types of relationships are what we would call relationships filled with grace. In other words, you can be honest about your life and no one is going to judge you…you have total and complete acceptance in this group.

The key here is these types of relationships take work. They don’t just happen.

We see this in scripture. **Let’s read Acts 2:42-47 and discuss.**

Acts 2:42 (NRSV): They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

**Worship** **God:** Acts 2:42 – Apostles’ teaching in small groups.

**Serve:** Acts 2:45 – Serve those in the small group, in the church and in the community.

**Belong Together**: Acts 2:42 – Fellowship and breaking of bread in small groups.

**Prayer:** Acts 2:42 - Lifted each other up in prayer

1. **Small groups will build Christ-centered relationships within the Church by:**
   1. Reading Scripture
   2. Fellowship (grace filled sharing)
   3. Service – serve in the small group, in the church, and in the community
   4. Prayer – praying for one another
2. **Small Groups will be a safe place to learn about Christ.**
   1. **No one** will ever be called on to talk or pray.
   2. All in the small group will have the opportunity to share. No one person will dominate the conversation
   3. Each person will have the opportunity to share how they feel the scriptures are speaking to them and how they will apply it.
   4. All are welcome at this group. This may mean that we may have a new person joining the group at some point. They are to be welcomed as one of our own.
3. **Small Groups will provide a place where members can practice living for Christ.**
   1. The beauty of learning about Christ is so we can live for Christ. This means this small group will be about how the sermon will be lived out in our lives by sharing about our lives with each other (good/bad/growing). Participants will also encourage each other to use their God-given gifts and talents in the church and in the community as the Holy Spirit leads each individual.
   2. Discussion facilitation will ideally rotate between members of the group. These individuals will be responsible for coming prepared to facilitate the discussion. Ideally all small group participants have listened to the sermon to be discussed. No one will be lecturing on a topic; these discussions will be stronger, and the group will gel more quickly if as many people as who feel comfortable join in on the discussions. Responses to questions **need to be personal** (this is a safe place) and related to how the sermon / scripture will be lived out in their life.
   3. One of the most important ways that you can help your Small Group is to communicate effectively. This means responding to your group communication quickly, letting your group know when and why you will have to miss.
   4. Even as individuals seek the Spirit’s direction in their lives, Small Groups are encouraged to seek the Spirit’s direction on their group as a whole. Some Small Groups will connect and remain a group, others may decide to multiply (12 is max), and still others may need to take a break at some point. We ask for a Labor Day through the 2nd week in December commitment to the small group.
4. **Small Groups will serve together.**
   1. To be their most effective, participants will serve their group by fulfilling several roles. These will include facilitators to lead, a coordinator to communicate, and someone to provide snacks (breaking of bread).
   2. Small Group members are encouraged to serve somewhere in the church. It is the desire of Good Shepherd that you will serve in the area where you are most passionate and gifted (i.e. gsKids, gsYouth, property team, band, vocals, sound, slides, live stream, coffee, connection desk, usher…etc.)
   3. As a Small Group we will serve at A Turning Point together at least 1x per semester.

**Framework for Sermon Based Small Group:**

**Roles within the Small Group:**

**Coordinator:** This is the person that takes responsibility for the group. Here is a list of what a coordinator would take responsibility for.

* Several days before each weekly small group session sends a form of communication (whatever the group decides is the best way to communicate) to everyone. This communication is to remind the small group of location (it may change, it may not), who the facilitator is for that week, food plans, and what will be discussed (content comes from the sermon / gs app).
* Records prayer requests in a group journal (one to two sentence prayer request). Prayer requests are to be personal.
* Record group attendance through the church center app.
* This person will stay in contact with Bryan.
* Organizes the group and sets schedules for facilitators and hosts.
* Talks through small group covenant and gathers signatures.

**Facilitator:** The word teacher or leader does not create the atmosphere we’re looking for. Unlike a teacher or leader, a facilitator is not expected to have all the answers or to have the final say on any issues. A facilitator will guide the conversations and welcome other people to participate in the discussion. Also, the role of facilitator is passed around, so people can take turns. After the first 4 weeks of small group we will pass around a sign-up list for each of you who wants to can facilitate the discussion.

**Host:** Provides snacks, space, set-up of room for 10-12 people

**Discuss and sign-up for either Facilitator or Host**

Set-up a calendar for 4 weeks at a time for facilitator & host sign-up. The coordinator will do the first 4 weeks to be the example for how to facilitate and host.

**Frequency and Times of Small Group:** Sermon based small groups **meet weekly** for one hour or one hour and fifteen minutes depending on the group. There needs to be a very clear beginning and end time to the group. The 1st session of Small Groups will begin meeting after Labor Day and will end two weeks before Christmas (Sunday September 12 – Sunday December 12).

**Covenant Form (pass out, discuss and sign form) – turn into Small Group Coordinator**