Biblical Basis for Small Groups

By Craig Cooper

1. Our God is a God of Relationships

God said, “Let us make man in our image.” The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have always experienced relationship. God created Adam with the need for relationship. He said it was not good for him to be alone. Adam saw his need for relationship. Should not we experience the same in the church? See Genesis 1:26; 2:18.

2. Small Groups

In Exodus 18:13-26, Moses receives advice from Jethro to release God’s people into accountability groups to empower others to minister. He indicated there should be groups of 1,000’s, 100’s, 50’s, and 10’s. From the very beginning, God had a plan to keep His leaders from burning out by dividing the responsibility of the people into groups.

3. Tribes, Clans and Families

Throughout the Old Testament, God related to His people in the context of which family they were a part of. For example, Achan was found in his sin by the process of going through each of these groupings of God’s family. Gideon, in trying to excuse the Lord’s call, also spoke of these same groupings of the Lord’s family. Joshua 7:16-18; Judges 6:14-15

4. Jesus and His Disciples

Jesus spent most of His time with His twelve disciples. It has been shown many times over that 12 adults is the optimum size for a small group. There are many principles to be learned from studying how Jesus built relationships and did discipleship among His group of 12 men. We need to follow this example. One of the biggest principles to be learned here is that Jesus called His twelve disciples to spend time with Him. Mark 3:13-14 talks about how Jesus called apostles one-on-one. Acts 1:12-14 talks about how the twelve then became a “group” for one another.

5. Life in the Early Church

The early Church followed Jesus’ pattern of discipleship and spiritual family life. They broke bread from house to house and had larger corporate meetings (Acts 2:46; Acts 5:42).

6. Church at Individuals Homes

You find many examples of church going on at individual’s houses. One example was at Mary’s, John Mark’s mother. There was a gathering of people here praying together. See Acts
7. The Phillippian Jailer

The Philippian jailer and his entire family found the Lord as Paul ministered to them in their home. This pattern of household salvation is duplicated many times in the New Testament (Acts 16:30-34).

8. 20/20 Vision

Throughout the book of Acts, you find a pattern of the first Christians meeting in two places - publicly and from house to house. One mention of this is found in Acts 20:20. Sometimes we call this type of church structure “20/20 Vision”. We need to see the importance of both “temple ministry” and “house to house” ministry.