

## The Reality Of Community—Homegroups

Our vision is that everyone who calls Reality 'home' would be in a homegroup.

Homegroups are an incredibly important part of our life together at Reality, and are one of our core values and key ministry strategies.

When people are able to cultivate meaningful Christian relationships and give and receive love and care, they have the best chance to grow in maturity and fruitfulness in Christ. **(Our Testimony)**

1. The Biblical Basis For Homegroups
2. The Practical Need For Homegroups
3. The Effective Ministry of Homegroups

### The Biblical Basis For Homegroups:

- One of the things Christians are to experience is **fellowship (Acts 2:42)**
  - **Koinonia** = act of partaking, sharing, that is to say participation, communion (the sharing or exchanging of intimate thoughts or feelings).
  - Cf. **Community** = A feeling of fellowship with others as a result of sharing common attitudes, interests, and goals<sup>1</sup>
    - In the NT it implies "an intensely close relationship with one another beyond mere human camaraderie."<sup>2</sup>
  - **The concept of koinonia, or community, or participation, or communion, is based on the nature of God as**
- The Trinity
  - **The Trinity is the basis for Christian fellowship and community**
    - Because God Himself is a fellowship/community,
      - We, being created in His image, are made to have fulfillment in fellowship/community with Him and with others
      - John 17:21

<sup>1</sup> Oxford American Dictionary

<sup>2</sup> Stephen Seamands, *Ministry In The Image of God*, 150.

that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.

Christianity was designed to be corporate and communal—lived out together.

- A “Lone Ranger” Christian is destined for failure because he or she is living outside of God’s design for Christianity.
  - **The Trinity is the basis for all Christian love and self-sacrifice**
    - The Father **gives** His Son for the world ([John 3:16](#))
    - The Son does **not seek** to do His own will but the will of the Father ([John 6:38](#))
    - The Spirit **glorifies** the Son and the Father ([John 16:14-15](#))
- **The Christian community is to be based on the Trinitarian Community**
  - Giving for others sake, not seeking our own, considering others as more important

### The question becomes:

- How do we do community like this?
- The Home
  - [Acts 2:42-47; 5:46; 20:20](#)
  - The testimony of the Book of Acts is that from the start of the Church **both** meetings were seen as necessary and profitable.
  - Therefore, in the structuring of Reality we see the need to be diligent with **both** venues.
  - Any ecclesiology ([Theology as applied to the nature and structure of the Christian Church](#)) that exalts one to the exclusion of the other is in error biblically.
  - This was the purposeful effort of the Early Church
    - Both at its **inception** ([Acts 2](#)) and a couple of **decades into** it ([Acts 20](#))
    - In both **Jerusalem** ([Acts 2](#)) and **Ephesus** ([Acts 20](#)) in modern Turkey
      - Which shows that it was not merely circumstantial, nor culturally bound
      - Rather, it was the normative practice of the Church everywhere

### The Practical Need For Homegroups:

- The Problem Of Size
  - Cracks and backdoors
  - Making the large small

- Difficulty in meeting people (group dynamics)
  - If all you get is the “meet and greet” you are getting so gypped
- The Tendency To Hide
  - **Hebrews 10:24-25** tells us we are not allowed to hide
    - **Consider**: to perceive or discern distinctly or clearly; to understand, consider, observe, think about, put full attention on. (We are to do this concerning one another, in order to...)
    - **Stimulate** (NIV/NKJV = **Spur**) (KJV = **Provoke**): A violent, powerful word meaning to incite
    - **To love and good deeds**: Love = agape. A self-sacrificial love that based primarily upon a decision as opposed to a feeling.
      - Feelings follow
      - But it is not about self-protection
      - Eph 2:10
    - **Encouraging/exhorting one another**: Strongly encourage or urge to action
    - **Assembling together**: For that very purpose (Not an event)
      - "Any idea...of enjoying salvation or being a Christian in isolation is foreign to the New Testament writings"<sup>3</sup>
      - A man once told John Wesley "The Bible knows nothing of solitary religion"

## The Effective Ministry of Homegroups:

- Getting The Most Out Of Sunday
    - The Sermon
      - Too much to retain
        - More important than retention is action
      - To be doers of the Word is the goal (application)
      - **2 Timothy 2:15**
        - Proverbs 28:19<sup>a</sup>
          - **He who tills his land will have plenty of food**
            - If you want nourishment you can't just have land—you gotta work it (Cf. Your Bible)
- A Historical Parallel

<sup>3</sup> Alan Stibbs, *God's Church*, 92

- Phillip Jakob Spener (1635-1705) was a German Lutheran who was active in ministry a century after the initial Reformation (So the mid to late 1600's)
  - Spiritual life in Germany was becoming formal and insincere
    - The fervor of 100 years ago was gone
  - He was interested in “**heart religion**” as opposed to “**head religion**”
  - Spener sought to reform the Lutheran Church
- He founded a movement called **Pietism**
  - Emphasized
    - Heartfelt religious devotion—sincerity
    - Ethical purity—holiness
    - Charitable activity—good deeds
    - Pastoral theology—changed lives through comprehension
  - John Wesley and others were profoundly impacted by *Pietism*
    - **I am not promoting Pietism** (it had its problems)
    - I am merely pointing out that there is a historical and fruitful precedent for the way we are thinking
- Its historians discern four general traits in this tendency:
  - (1) **Its experiential character**, pietists were people of the heart for whom Christian living was the fundamental concern
  - (2) **Its biblical focus**, pietists were, to paraphrase John Wesley, "people of one book" who took standards and goals from the pages of Scripture
  - (3) **Its perfectionistic bent**, pietists were serious about holy living and expended every effort to follow God's law, spread the gospel, and provide aid for the needy
  - (4) **Its reforming interest**, pietists usually opposed what they regarded as coldness and sterility in established church forms and practices
- As a result of a sermon given by Spener in 1669, the local church began meeting in small groups to “[pray, discuss the previous week's sermon, and apply the passages from Scriptures and devotional writings to their lives](#)”.<sup>4</sup>
  - This was done for the purpose of connecting people in community that they might encourage one another in real, authentic, Christ-centered living and relationships.
  - **This is the same thing the Lord has shown us at Reality** (nothing new)

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<sup>4</sup> See Mark Noll, *Turning Points*, 230

- In his *Pia Desideria* (The Piety We Desire) (1675) Spener outlined 6 points that were needed to reform Christian spirituality in Germany (3 are important to us)
  - 1. A more extensive use of the Word of God among us
  - 2. A renewal of the priesthood of all believers
  - 3. A return to authentic Christian living as opposed to mere cerebral apprehension
    - The results were fantastic
- Getting The Most Out Of Each Other
  - “The Bible knows nothing of solitary religion”
  - That is because God knows nothing other than relationship
    - The Trinity
- Fellowship
  - **Koinonia** = act of partaking, sharing, that is to say participation, communion.
  - Cf. **Community** = A feeling of fellowship with others as a result of sharing common attitudes, interests, and goals<sup>5</sup>
    - “An intensely close relationship with one another beyond mere human camaraderie.”<sup>6</sup>
- **Concern** (**Philippians 2:3-4**)
- **Accountability** (**Hebrews 3:12-13**)
- **Relationships** (**Proverbs 27:9 and 17**)
- **Equipping** (**2 Timothy 3:16-17**)
- “Though people long for community, many are unwilling to count the cost necessary for it”<sup>7</sup>.
  - It takes commitment
    - Ephesians 4:2-3  
**2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love,**
    - 3 being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.**

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<sup>5</sup> Oxford American Dictionary

<sup>6</sup> Stephen Seamands, *Ministry In The Image of God*, 150.

<sup>7</sup> Stephen Seamands, *Ministry in the Image of God*, 40

- Acts 2:42  
They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

Homegroups are: **Biblical** | **Practical** | **Effective**