

Life Together

Week 6: The Gift of Small Groups

Review from Weeks 1-5:

- Loneliness is an epidemic of our culture, a product of technological advance and hyper-individualization.
- God himself – the Trinity—exists in perfect, eternal community, and is the starting/ending point for human relationship – and He desires friendship with his image bearers.
- Christian Friendship is covenantal, life-giving, and transcends our emotional desires.

(Introduction) What are the visible fruits of a community that is truly united together in Christ?

————→ **Today's Question: How can I build up lasting relationships here at Hope Church?** ←————

Why Small Groups at Hope Church?

3 Incomplete images:

- Small Groups as social clubs
- Small Groups as Bible studies
- Small Groups as church growth mechanisms

Small Groups at Hope Church: *In obedience to Jesus' call to love one another, small groups create familial communities of fellowship [covenant friendship], shepherding discipleship, and mission.*

[Small Groups are not the only vehicle for “life together” at Hope Church... more next week!]

Guardrails of a health Small Group (vehicles of covenant friendship):

- Small Groups at Hope Church are not expected to split or multiply.
- Small Groups at Home Church may split or multiply, if it leads to better life in community (including the formation of new Small Groups).
- The health of your Small Group is not measured by your efforts of evangelism.
- The life of a Small Group is a wonderfully redemptive and will naturally create opportunities for evangelism.
- Membership is not required for Hope Church Small Groups (except for leaders).
- All Small Group members are strongly *exhorted* to participate in the broader life of the corporate body – including membership (see session 1).
- Small Groups are encouraged to take occasional breaks throughout the year.
- Small Groups are encouraged to meet frequently (probably more often than you currently do).
- Small Groups are rooted in the study of Scripture and Prayer (Time).
- Small Groups grow through a million small connections and celebrations (Moments/Milestones).
- The health of Small Groups is directly connected to their life of prayer.

Application (Discussion):

- Share a story of a time your small group ministered to you.
- Are you in a healthy small group? If not, what barriers are preventing you from joining one?
- Are any of the incomplete images above descriptive of your small group? If so, what are some steps you can take in community to expand your life together?
- What is the advantage of connecting small group study to the sermon text each week?