

Introduction: EFCA Pastor Small Groups

Cultivating transparency, vulnerability and grace-compelled accountability among EFCA pastors.

THE NEED

- As pastors, we acutely experience the force of relational isolation and compartmentalization due to unique burdens.
- Pastors need trusted spaces where they're understood, and they can openly share as humans without fear of shame, disproportionate responses or the misuse of information.
- Fellow pastors in similar positions from other churches are best positioned to provide the first line of care because they have no authority over each other, and they understand the burdens of ministry as pastors.

BIBLICAL VISION AND INSTRUCTION

- Peter exhorts pastors to remember we are sheep before we are shepherds. We must actively experience the gospel to be faithful and effective ministers of the gospel. We cannot lead God's sheep to places we are not willing to go (1 Pet 5:3).
- Paul instructs pastors to guard the ongoing work of the gospel in our lives in addition to the content of the gospel for the efficacy and longevity of our ministry (1 Tim 4:16).
- We are intended to experience the gospel through each other in vulnerable, transparent, grace-compelled community. We know this to be true for our congregation, but we often neglect this for ourselves (Heb 3:13; James 5:16).
- Maturity in Christ is marked by growing in dependence on Christ, not growing independence. Mature pastors hunger for growth and Christlikeness in community with others (interdependence), no matter the cost or inconvenience (Prov 27:7, 17; Phil 3:7-15; 1 Thess 4:1, Eph 4:15-16).
- In the gospel, the Holy Spirit enables change and uses grace as the compelling force for our own pursuit of transformation and holiness. Repentance and transformation are compelled and enabled by the unconditional, undeserved extravagant kindness of God (Rom 2:4). As pastors, let us lead by example in coming to the throne of grace through each other, as "chief repenters" (Titus 2:11-14; Heb 3:13; 4:12-16).

THE SOLUTION: HEALTHY PASTOR SMALL GROUPS

- **Purpose:** For pastors to cultivate friendships where they can take off the shepherd's hat and receive the gospel through each other in order to grow in Christ, receive care, sharpen each other and as a result be faithful and enduring shepherds for God's flock.
- When we gather, we have two aims:
 1. Be the presence of Christ with each other by being a trusted space that draws out the hearts of each other.
 2. Step toward Christ through each other by vulnerably sharing and confessing with each other.