

Like cycling or Formula 1, Christianity is often mistaken for an individual pursuit when in fact it is a team game.

The Bible says that Christians are part of a body. Believers in a local congregation are interconnected. We need one another. We need the differences that God has put into each one of us for the good of the greater whole. In various passages we are told to spur one another on, to be devoted to one another, to encourage one another daily, even to confess our sins to one another.

Maybe that sounds a bit too close for comfort? It is certainly true that living as part of a body is not always easy. "To live above with saints we love will be eternal glory. To live below with saints we know is quite another story!" We have different personalities. We have different ways of doing things. We are pulled together from all kinds of different backgrounds.

But while we all recognise the difficulties of life as a body, we also need to recognise that it is nothing short of essential. Without other Christians around you, you will not grow and thrive. You may not even survive. A wise old Christian used to say, "If your Christian life did not begin at the individual level then it did not begin; but if your Christian life stops at the individual level then it stops."

More visually, the same point is made by the fable of the Highland elder. Noticing that a member of the congregation was keeping himself to himself and not coming out to meet with other Christians, the elder went to visit. Being a man of deep wisdom but few words, he pulled a piece of coal from the household fire and laid it on its own beside the grate. Soon this lone coal had cooled and ceased to glow. The elder nodded significantly, then popped the coal back into the fire where it promptly rekindled among its fellows.

This fact (and it is a fact) that we need one another shapes a lot of how we try to do things at *Chalmers*. On Sundays the services do not finish with the final hymn, but carry on as we talk with one another. Hospitality and church family events play a vital role in giving us time together. But perhaps the most important way in which we try to foster healthy, sustaining Christian comradeship is through our small groups. It is hard to form strong friendship with lots of people all at once, but in groups of 6-12 we can begin to get to know one another in a way that allows for genuine mutual spiritual benefit.

These groups are arranged in different networks: Home Groups for adults around the city; CORD for postgraduates and young workers, meeting centrally; Focus for students; a ladies Bible study; a group for older members.

All of these follow a similar format: time together with a meal or tea and coffee; discussing a Bible passage together and applying it to daily life; praying with and for one another. The life of most groups also spills over into socialising and getting to know one another's friends, both Christians and non-Christians. These groups are also how a lot of our mutual support and care takes place in the life of *Chalmers*, as people know when people need help with lifts or meals or moving house.

If you would like to find out more about any of these different groups then please use the relevant contact information at the bottom of this article.

To finish off with, though, how can we make the most of our small groups?

- a) Join one if you possibly can.
- b) If you absolutely cannot join one then find other ways of regularly spending time with a few other Christians from church to pray and encourage one another.
- c) Once you are part of a group, turn up as often as you can – your very presence will encourage the others.
- d) In the group, do not be afraid to speak up in discussions or pray out loud.
- e) Do not be afraid to speak honestly about questions you have or things you are struggling with.
- f) Always view your group as an opportunity to grow yourself and help others grow.

CONTACTS

Home Groups Coordinators – Willie and Janet McGhee (willieandjanet@chalmerschurch.org)

Cord (postgraduates and young workers) – Calum Johnston (calum@chalmerschurch.org)

Focus (students) – Andy and Kath Buchan (andy@chalmerschurch.org)

For information about the **Ladies' Bible Study** (led by Sally Sydserff) or **Seniors' Group** (led by Dick Anderson) please contact Fiona MacKenzie (fiona@chalmerschurch.org)