Bringing Church Into Our Homes

Kevin Samuel 5 April 2018



I recently read that during 2017, an average of 22 billion texts were sent every day worldwide (excluding app to app messages). In the same year, an average of 60 billion messages were sent via WhatsApp and Facebook. That's a total of more than 80 billion messages sent every day, over just three platforms! This clearly points to the fact that mankind has a deep desire to be connected and for community. [1]

> Mankind has settled for an artificial form of "connectedness" whilst still searching for the authentic.

We've been created in God's likeness, a Trinitarian God, who is three persons in perfect unity and community. The stats above point to the fact that we've been created with community in mind. Mankind has settled for an artificial form of "connectedness" whilst still searching for the authentic. Our desire for genuine community is part of who we are. Even at the very beginning, when God created man, He said that it is not good for man to be alone. The early church understood this. They did things together and their lives were intertwined and connected with each other.

Church Community All Week

The church is a community of people called together for a purpose, but what does that practically look like? Many churches today spend a lot of time creating the “perfect” Sunday meeting. They neglect the importance of a culture where believers meet daily in one another’s homes (Acts 2:46; 5:42). Many churches include small groups as an optional extra, but it is actually so much more: it’s a fundamental ingredient of how the church should meet together.

> Small groups are…a means to birth authentic community life

As we read through the book of Acts, we see plenty of life and action taking place during the week in people’s homes. It is not all about the larger, corporate meetings. Sunday corporate gatherings should overflow with the life brought from our homes during the week. As much as I enjoy big corporate meetings, there is something quite unique that takes place during a meal around a table, or a time of prayer after a “braai”, or in sharing stories of God’s goodness in the living room.

Why Small Groups?

Weekly small groups ensure that there is an environment for people to live out true fellowship in community. Small groups are not an end in themselves, but a means to birth authentic community life where people can get together more regularly than just one formal meeting a week.

A. Community Becomes a Lifestyle

Small groups don’t necessarily equate to true community. However, they do create a pathway to bring about healthy community living by cultivating a culture where people meet regularly in one another’s homes. Unity is possible through a Sunday corporate meeting, but authentic community is not possible without believers doing life together throughout the week.

B. Everyone Contributes

Apart from activating a healthy sense of community, small groups also provide a place where each person can contribute and grow. The Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea both have the River Jordan as their source. Of the two, only the Sea of Galilee has an outflow, which is why it is healthy and vibrant compared to the Dead Sea, which has no such outflow. In the same manner,

when believers attend Sunday services and remain spectators, their spiritual condition will be much like that of the Dead Sea.

Smaller groups create an environment that encourages believers to have an outflow. Paul states in 1 Corinthians 14:26 that as each one brings their contribution, the church is built up. Each individual grows as they are stretched to step out in their gifting, to give towards the needs of others or to pray for one another. Environments like these subconsciously teach believers that they don't need a "man of power" with a microphone and a savvy slide show to reach the people around them.

C. Intimacy is Fostered

Small groups also stimulate authentic relationships between believers. It's not always possible to sincerely open up to others at large meetings. A smaller group setting provides the time and opportunity to share and be vulnerable. I recently attended one of our congregation's small groups where each one shared their salvation story. By the end of the evening, I felt so much closer to each one as I had been moved by their vulnerability, learned about their history and shared in their struggles or joy. Meaningful times like these allow for relational bridges to be built. So when help is needed or support needs to be given, it comes from people who take a genuine interest.

D. Culture is Entrenched

Sociologists have found that the best way to shape the culture of large groups of people is to implement the intended change within a small group of like-minded people. When new culture changes start to take root in the smaller group, gradually more people get included until you have effectively shaped the culture of the larger group. In a similar way, small groups create an environment where healthy, New Testament culture can be shaped by encouragement and example. In Phillipians 4:9, Paul instructs the church to remember his teaching and the way that he modelled it to them through his manner of life. Throughout the week, leaders of small groups have an opportunity to teach and exemplify a manner of living that brings glory to God.

E. Godly Values can be Modelled & Taught

As a student, I had the privilege of regularly being in my leaders' homes where I could witness how godly husbands loved their wives and how godly parents trained their children. Over many years, these godly examples influenced my value system and shaped the way I conduct my life as a husband, father and leader in an incredible way. Not only do small groups provide an environment for modelling a way of life to one another, they also create opportunities for interactive teaching and discussion. Through these times of teaching, values can be explained and established so that the theory becomes a heart conviction.

> ..why not join a mid-week small group and see how much deeper your relationships can go?

Home Groups Keep Us Healthy

Life has become tremendously busy and the demands on our time are intense. Although it can be uncomfortable to open up your home to others on a regular basis, by doing so, you open up your life to greater spiritual growth, blessing, encouragement and accountability. As healthy, New Testament churches, we need to break open the kind of genuine, community living for which we were made and which our hearts actually crave. So if you are not yet experiencing this kind of community within your church, why not join a mid-week small group and see how much deeper your relationships can go?

[1]