



WHY SMALL GROUPS?

Sevenoaks Alliance Church is committed to discipleship, fellowship, and transformational growth. As such, small groups are an integral part of its mission and purpose. Although 'small groups' are not the only way to express community, they certainly are a tried and tested way for individuals, especially in a large church, to come together for friendship, mutual encouragement, study, prayer, transformational discipleship, care and outreach. In the context of a small group, individuals can find deep and meaningful relationships, care in times of crisis, intensified faith and a context for team outreach and mission.

GOD AS COMMUNITY

The case for engagement in authentic Christian community is rooted in the self-revelation of God to humankind:

Genesis 1:26

²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness..."

"Note the references to 'us' and 'our,' which proclaims the core doctrine of the Trinity...The creation account provides us an amazing window into the nature of the community of God, in whose image we are created. This plurality of beings comes to the consensus to create humans in their image. They create in their collective image, which, in part, is a community-bearing image. It is not enough to say that God is interested in

community or obsessed with community. God, rightly defined and understood, *is* community.”¹

Since we are created in His image it is only right that we too are created for community and not isolation. As image-bearers of God we actually bear the image better and more complete in community.

JESUS IN COMMUNITY

In the garden humankind enjoyed unfettered access to (community with) God² but this was fractured by the Fall.³ The coming of Jesus restored the divine image of community: “The Father sent the Person of the Son into our world that we might know restored authentic relationship. The Son came that we might know God.”⁴

Throughout the ministry of Jesus, he would often withdraw alone with his group of disciples:

Mark 3:7-10

⁷Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the lake, and a large crowd from Galilee followed. ⁸When they heard all he was doing, many people came to him from Judea, Jerusalem, Idumea, and the regions across the Jordan and around Tyre and Sidon. ⁹Because of the crowd he told his disciples to have a small boat ready for him, to keep the people from crowding him. ¹⁰For he had healed many, so that those with diseases were pushing forward to touch him.

At a time when it might seem strategic to ‘do ministry’ since there was a larger crowd, he chose to withdraw with his small band of close followers. Jesus did not link large numbers with real, true and authentic community. Rather, Jesus chose to work with a few individuals who he could invest in and build up to become a group of life-changers.

Mark 3:13

¹³Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him.

¹ Bill Donahue & Russ Robinson, *Building a Church of Small Groups*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2001): 22

² Genesis 3:8

³ Genesis 3:23-24

⁴ Julie A. Gorman, *Community that is Christian*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan, Baker Books, 2002): 33

Jesus called twelve men on a journey of transformational discovery. Though the masses had needs, “Jesus followed the divine pattern of gathering a few so that he would transform many lives.”⁵ That too is the pattern for small group ministry. By gathering together in small groups we can not only deepen our own walk with Christ and journey of faith, we can also work more effectively together in outreach and mission. Small groups are about being discipled that we might disciple, being blessed that we might be a blessing and experiencing growth that might help others to grow.

⁵ Donahue & Robinson, 27