


Cultivating Change
“Cultivating The Covenant Community”

Part 3

Ephesians 4:1-7, 11-16

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INTRODUCTION

Small groups are **not an add-on, secondary concern, or fad**. What happens in a good small group is part of the very work of the church itself. It is **primary**, and should be seen that way. **They are a valid expression of what the body of Christ is supposed to be doing on the earth**. They are a structured expression of the doctrine of the church. They are as big a part of what the New Testament dictates as preaching and teaching.

But, every member in any group experiences **the common problem of living in a fallen world**. As fallen people, we love and deal with **other fallen people**. Understand that, Adam and Eve passed on to us **the art of going our own way, we all encounter fallen spiritual, relational, psychological, emotional, and functional dynamics**.

What did that mean for Adam and Eve, and what does it mean for us?

Disconnection from the Source of life

Dual loss of relationship

Shame

Disobedience

Lost knowledge of God’s ways

Lost control

Immunity/ Resistance From Community Means No Ministry

Ministry of Reconciliation - 2nd Corinthians 5:18-20

The goal is the ministry of reconciliation - You/We are bringing people back to God and the life He created for them to live.

I. What Reconciliation Looks Like?

- A. **Return to the Source**. We will discover that we can turn to God moment by moment for help in tough situations. We learn that God will provide answers, strength, community, opportunities, and everything we need. We will experience God’s provision through:
Prayer; Turning to God for answers; Leaning on God’s strength; Sharing testimonies with each other; Becoming Prayer Partners.
- B. **Reconnect**. We can learn to reconnect in **real relationship with God and other people**. We’ll learn to tell God about our struggles, share victories, draw strength from daily relationship with Him— and realize, maybe for the first time, **that we’re not going through this alone**. Also, we’ll learn to **share with and lean on each other’s**. We can find that God uses group members to deliver support, answers, wisdom, encouragement, correction, modeling, strength, and comfort.
- C. **Experience grace**. As we learn to share failures, fears, pain, and problems and just be seen as we really are, group members find they are more alike than different. They feel less judged. This frees people to take off the fig leaves and show their real selves.

As grace is offered from the group, their shame, guilt, and condemnation lessen. As time goes on, they internalize the group’s acceptance and learn to accept themselves. They treat their failures as opportunities **to learn instead of toxic opportunities to feel guilty, ashamed, or “less-than.”** They experience grace.

Turn to James 1:1-8; 3:2; 5:13-16

- D. **Renew obedience**. Group members get encouraged to obey God, follow Him as the authority for life, and **develop structured, fruitful obedience**. Some for the first time see others seek to do what God asks and find a new way of life. They find in **the context of community the benefits of living life the way He says**. They, **openly share their struggles to obey**. Share how they obey and what it looks like. **Models grace despite struggle and failures.**

“From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work” (Ephesians 4: 16).

- E. **Learn new ways.** Group members learn new principles and ways for living they could not have discovered ***on their own***. They find that the Bible is the source of God’s truth for living life and learn to celebrate having a **“lamp to [their] feet” (Psalm 119: 105)**. In finding truth they are **relieved of the uncertainty of trying to figure it out on their own**. They discover that God’s ways work in every arena.
- F. **Understand control.** In learning to give up control of what they cannot control, they learn to take responsibility and control of themselves.

Serenity Prayer Culture – That is a Calmness, Quietness, and Stillness in prayer. To accept what we cannot change, change what we can change, and ***seek wisdom to know the difference***

Encourage trust in God for what they cannot control or change. Trust is not “manipulation” or “falsification” (any evidence that **HELPS** to establish the falsity or something false)

Hold each other accountable for being responsible and taking control of themselves in their life, feelings, attitudes, and behaviors.

CLOSING - Preparing for Your Exciting Journey

Here is an important principle about achieving transcendent goals through small group dynamics: ***The more you possess something, the more you can give it away.***

The more we practice the six aspects of reconciliation in our own lives, the more we will understand them and be able to impart them, creatively and naturally, to others. Even our young Christians could be on the path of these six. **They are matters of the heart, not knowledge.**

Look at them again:

- See God as the source of life and all we need.
- See relationship as our primary need in life, with Him and other people.
- Seek and practice grace and forgiveness.
- Submit to God as the boss.
- Seek His ways to live.
- Let God be in control of the world and others; develop control of oneself.

**2 Corinthians 6:11-13
Amplified Bible (AMP)**

¹¹ **We are speaking freely to you, Corinthians [we are keeping nothing back], and our heart is opened wide.**

¹² **There is no limit to our affection for you,
*but you are limited in your own affection [for us].***

¹³ **Now in the same way as a fair exchange [for our love toward you]—I am speaking as [I would] to children—
*open wide [your hearts] to us also.***

“From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work” (Ephesians 4: 16).

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