**DICISPLESHIP IN SMALL GROUPS**

*(Presenters Outline)*

**Benefits of Meeting in Small Groups**

Meeting in small groups can meet the following needs:

1***) Fellowship***

We are called to fellowship together with other believers, this does not mean just worshiping together on Sundays but living our lives together outside of church as well. Small group fellowships are where lifelong relationships can begin.

2) ***Emotional Support***

The word tells us to bear each other's burdens and confess our sins to one another. The intimate setting of a small group of brothers and sisters in Christ can promote the kind of trust and openness that allows these to happen and that is where spiritual healing occurs.

3) ***Spiritual growth***

The word tells us that we need to study God's word and a small group setting can provide the opportunity and accountability to for us to learn more about our God through His word.

**What a Small Group Looks Like**

1) Location: ***Home, barn, church***

A small group can be hosted anywhere at any time. It is important in cowboy church to consider cultural relevance in a meeting place as well as comfort.

2) Number in group: ***5-12***

While there is not hard fast number of people to make a small group, it is more effective if it has enough people that if one or two don't show up you still have a group but not so large that is loses its intimate feel.

3) Frequency: ***Once a week***

Again there is no hard fast rule on frequency of meetings, however, people like routine. Some groups meet once a week, some once a month, if you are following a bible study in your small group meeting, once a week for a short period of time may be more productive.

4) Duration: ***3-4 weeks***

Duration of a small group can depend on several factors, some may be based on structured bible studies that last a certain number of weeks, others may be based on time of year or church programs and some may continue on without a stopping point. All of these are fine if that is what the group wants, however, in cowboy church there will be much more participation the shorter the time commitment. You can get more folks to come to a small group fellowship or bible study for a few weeks a couple of times a year than you will getting people to come to never ending gatherings.

5) Length of meeting: ***1hour-11/2hours***

The length of the meeting should be up to the host family and consensus of the group, however there should be a set stopping point for each meeting that remains consistent. People like routine, especially when they have kids in school. If a people never know what time the meeting will end they will be less likely to stay hooked up. This can be hard because sometimes things are going so good it is hard to shut it down. Set a timer!

6) Meeting structure: ***Eating, fellowship,*** ***prayer,*** ***bible study***

The word is clear, it is important to break bread together! Just read all throughout the new testament when believers gathered together they ate together, it is a very important time of bonding with our fellow believers. Equal time between fellowship, prayer and bible study is a good way to divide the limited amount of time.

7) Study Material: Must be ***church approved***

There are all types of structured study materials that can be leader lead or DVD based, they can be topical studies (marriage, faith, etc.) or book studies (James, Romans etc.), all types are fine as long as they support and uphold the doctrine, values and mission of the church and have been approved by church leadership.

8) Group leader: The group leader acts as a ***facilitator,*** not a  ***teacher***

Growth occurs as the group interacts with one another while fellowshipping with the Holy Spirit. The group leader can facilitate discussions, signal times to move from fellowship to prayer from prayer to bible study and guide the study to help keep it on topic and relevant.

9) Children: Children need ***supervision*** and ***structure***

A small group can be undermined if the children are not properly considered. If they hate coming to the small group meeting or they are disruptive to the meeting the chances of the family stay hooked up is small. A effort should be made to make it a fun time for the children, separate from the adult group. This duty can be shared and rotated.