

A Small Group Story

Throughout Christian history, God’s people have repeatedly reoriented themselves into small groups focused on spiritual growth and holiness, to be more like Jesus. Today you will see that this is a biblical pattern, and how we live it out at hope.

Historical examples:

Early church households – (30-100 AD)

Desert Fathers and Early Monasticism (250-400 AD)

Benedictine Communities (500-1200 AD)

Pre-reformers like Wycliffe, Jan Hus. (1300-1500)

Luther and the reformers, “ecclesiola in ecclesia” or “small churches in the big church” (1500-1600)

Pietist small groups (1650)

Moravians (1750)

Revival Prayer Meetings (1850)

Modern Evangelicalism (1900 to present)

Launching the Mission

Luke 24:45-47

“Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, ⁴⁶and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, ⁴⁷and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.”

Acts 2:14-36

Peter preaches the first sermon.

- The Gospel is in accordance with prophecy, especially that from Joel 2:28-32.
- Jesus is the Messiah promised in Psalm 110 and Psalm 16.
- He’s the heir of king David... and you killed him. Now repent!

And about 3000 people were saved and added to the church that day.

Sustaining the Mission

Big question: how to make disciples of three thousand people? How to give them care and connection?

Answer: Small groups

Acts 2:42-43

“And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. ⁴³ And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles.”

- Apostolic authority was established through demonstration of miracles.
- The new Christians devoted themselves to learning and obeying God’s word.

Small groups are word centered.

Acts 2:44-45

“And all who believed were together and had all things in common. ⁴⁵ And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need.”

- The new Christians shared their possessions among each other.
- They took care of others around them in need.

Small groups are how God’s people care for one another.

Acts 2:46-47

“And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.”

- They ate together, and they gave thanks.
- Unbelievers saw this and perhaps participated in it. “Having favor with all the people.”
- People were being saved all the time!

Mission Multiplied

Now it’s time for Daniel to share 😊

Questions for Personal Study

1. What roles did small groups serve in Bible times? Christian history?
2. Did anything stand out to you regarding Peter’s first sermon? Why was it AWESOME?
3. What stands out concerning the way small groups functioned in the New Testament?
4. Is the Holy Spirit leading you to take any steps forward in response to this teaching?