

Why D-Groups?



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The impetus for small groups finds its main thrust in Jesus' directive to, **“Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19-20)**. The weight of this imperative is twofold. One, this was the first commission of the God-verified King of the earth. Two, this was simply the end and new beginning of the cycle Jesus himself lived out.

A succinct dive into Jewish education will clarify.

Discipleship in Jesus' Context

When a Jewish child begins school, they attend **Bet Sefer (House of the Book)**—our modern equivalent of elementary school. By age 10, these children would have memorized the entire Torah (Genesis–Deuteronomy). After this, most would learn their family trade. The best students would continue to **Bet Talmud (House of Learning)**, memorizing the remainder of the Old Testament by age 15. Then, only the best of the best would become apprentices to a rabbi, taking upon themselves the rabbi's "yoke." Apprenticing under a rabbi was equivalent to acceptance into an elite Ivy League program. The student would leave everything to regularly be with the rabbi, gradually become like him, and eventually do what he did—become a rabbi. After several years, the rabbi would finally say, “Okay, you're ready. Now you go and make disciples in your own rabbi school.”

The Cycle of Discipleship

So when Jesus said, **“Follow me” (Matt. 4:19)**, this was what he was inviting the disciples into. When he told the crowds, **“Take my yoke upon you” (Matt. 11:29)**, he was referencing his way of life and knowing God. When he said, **“Go and make disciples,”** he was ending his formal teaching period and commissioning his followers to invite others into his ways and practices. Paul echoed this when instructing Timothy:

“These things you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, commit them to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.” (2 Timothy 2:2, ESV)

Paul disciplined Timothy, who was to find apprentices of his own. These apprentices would then continue the discipleship cycle with faithful men who continue it with others, which continues today and reaches even our corner of SWBC. As D-Group leaders, we are now continuing this cycle.

The biblical and historical impetus is clear, yet it must pair with a passionate and hopeful dream of what the Holy Spirit can accomplish through your discipleship. The disciples were told:

“And you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

"To the ends of the earth" was a big ask, especially when Southwest wasn't flying out of Jerusalem. Yet somehow, they were able to dream of it.

Dreaming or Drudgery

Without dreaming, shepherding a D-Group can feel like endless drudgery. Consider a man named **Will Howse**. He led a small group and discipled Jordan Goodie in Huntsville. Jordan led a small group and discipled Zac Hansen. Zac later moved to Las Cruces, NM, led a small group, and discipled Taylor Cruz. I've led small groups for over 10 years, developing leaders like Justin Vistine (now leading a college ministry in New Mexico), Tristan (now becoming a counselor in Springfield, MO), Aaron (now a physician's assistant in Albuquerque, NM), and Jake (working at the research ranch for NMSU), among others.

None of us have ever met Will Howse. However, because he befriended, loved, and discipled other men, we all now love Jesus and make disciples ourselves. I don't know if he dreamed his small groups in Huntsville, TX would have that reach but that's what I dream for my small groups now. That's what you can dream for yours - that you would help your D-Group grow spiritually and then replicate other D-groups in places and with people you may never meet.

I like to imagine that Will Howse will hear **“Well done, good and faithful servant”** not only when he meets King Jesus but also when Jordan sees Jesus, when Zac sees Jesus, when I see Jesus, and so on.

I spent my entire life playing baseball, determined to play Division 1 baseball. I have trophies, pictures, letterman jackets, rings, and Division 1 gear. Sadly, the tangible fruit of those 21 years fits into two boxes. Yet, the fruit from Will Howse's life over the last 15 years couldn't fit into my entire house. I want my life—and my kids' lives—to bear lasting fruit like Will's because he passionately continued Jesus' discipleship cycle, envisioning how far the Holy Spirit could reach through just one small group. **I challenge you to dream and imagine big for your D-Group too.**

Questions and Thoughts to Consider

- Ask God to open your eyes to see friends, relatives, neighbors, and coworkers whom you can invite into your life for meals or activities in order to build relationships.
- What kingdom dreams are you dreaming?
- What goals are you setting for yourself and your D-Group?

- Assess the spiritual development of each person in your D-Group. What is their next step in spiritual formation?
- Ask God to inspire you with a vision of ordinary people reaching the ends of the earth through the Holy Spirit.
- Identify one or two individuals in your D-Group who could potentially start their own groups in the future.