

A Spiritual Happy Man Is in A Small Group

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As we continue this series of the habits of a spiritual happy man let's review the premise we established last month. 'The strength of a church is not proportionally related to the strength of its programs or ministries; not related to the number of members or people attending; not related to the popularity of the pastor or his ability to expand and deliver the Word of God; but, of the spiritual strength of each man who is in the church.'

This month we are going to look at the habit of men being in small groups. Why do leaders make such a fuss to get men in small groups? What do they see, that wants men – you – in a small group?

Men tend to be isolationists. We like to live our lives in isolation. Yes, we get together and have a good time; but, when it comes to day-to-day struggles, we tend to try and work it out for ourselves. When women have problems or concerns they move toward relationships – when men have problems or concerns they tend to move towards isolation. We have been wired and trained from the earliest of age to believe that if we cannot deal with our own problems it is a sign of weakness. And you know what, the Devil knows this.

Scripture tells us that *"Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour"*, (1 Peter 5:8). Noticed that I underlined "someone." The scriptures does not say a group of people but someone, a person who is alone. Lions attack sick, young, or straggling animals; they choose victims who are alone or not alert. Peter warns us to watch out for Satan when we are suffering or struggling with an issue. If you are feeling alone, weak, helpless, and cut off from other believers, or if you are so focused on your troubles that you forget to watch for danger, those are the times when you are especially vulnerable to Satan's attacks. During times of suffering, we need to seek Christian brothers for support. Satan understands the value of isolation and attacking those by themselves.

Oftentimes you will see men who are always acting as if everything is great, fine, perfect. We ask each other how are you doing and we answer with, "Everything is great, couldn't be better." But deep down we know that we are struggling and we are seeking answers and we are at a lost on what to do.

Jesus built a small group when he chose those twelve men to walk alongside him; men who he poured his life into for three years. He started the mindset of a small group and the purpose of the small group. So, we see that God in His infinite wisdom recognized that He has more options to help you when you are in a small group. Think about it – when you are isolated, who has more options? The Devil, a predator like a lion seeking to devour you.

So, you ask what can a small group do for me? Well, we can start with scripture. Paul wrote to the Galatians, *"Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ,"* (Gal. 6:1-2). No brother in Christ should ever think that he is totally independent and does not need help from others, and no one should feel excused from the task of helping others.

Solomon in his wisdom wrote, *“Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up!”* (Ecc. 4:9-10). Then in verse 12 Solomon wrote, *“And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him – a threefold cord is not quickly broken.”* Men we need each other. Notice in verse 12 Solomon said *“a man might prevail.”* This does not mean he will. It just means he *might* win some battles; but, he will not win them all, or even close. Men, as all humans, are built and designed for companionship, not isolation, for relationships, not loneliness. We are not here on earth to serve ourselves; but, to serve God and others. Don't isolate yourself and try to go it alone. Seek companions; seek a small group.

Hebrews 10:24-25, *“let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”* Yes, I know that we typically use this scripture to encourage the saints to gather together for worship on Sunday mornings. But the scripture does not really differentiate the difference of Sunday mornings or just gathering together. Look what the writer says, *“consider how to stir up one another to love and good works”* and *“encouraging one another.”*

Let me share one more scripture that is very familiar in ministries to men, Proverbs 27:17; oftentimes we use this verse, *“Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another.”* There is truth here, but the only way this can be applied in our lives is to spend time with other men. Other men, who we will give permission to challenge us when they see us missing the mark; holding us accountable in our walk with Christ.

So, what makes a really good small group for men? Two or more men who want to walk more closely with God (I recommend groups of no more than four to five for accountability purposes), a leader who is passionate for his men and prays for them regularly; and a respect for the process of relationships. In other words, kind of like the Vegas slogan, *“What is said here, stays here!”*

Let me encourage you, if you do not have such men in your life; find one or a group of men. You will be blessed to have such men who will challenge you, be a listening ear when you need to talk, and more importantly, pray for you. *“Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another.”* The only way this can happen is to have someone in your life that will sharpen you, to knock off those rough edges and smooth the edge so you can be ready to fight the battle that lays before us every day. To put on that whole armor of God that Paul speaks of in Ephesians Chapter 6.

We need men who will stand shoulder to shoulder with us every day. When you see pictures depicting ancient times with men readying for battle, how are those men standing in formation? Or if you watch movies such as Troy, or Braveheart as the men are getting ready to charge, how are those men standing? Shoulder to Shoulder.

Will you be a man who will stand shoulder to shoulder with another man in this battle? Will you pour your life into other men? Will you let other men pour their lives into you? Do you want to change families in your church? Do you want to change your church to be more of an impact to your community? Then start by sharing life with other men – men within your church and men outside your church. Developing relationships that will sharpen each of us to be the man God desires for us all and imparting the Gospel of God into each other's lives.