

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

Extreme Home Takeover, Part 6

Questions written by Pastor John Dehnert

April 22, 2007



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Interested in leading your own small group, but are afraid you may not have what it takes? Why don't you check out our small group leader training, **Foundations in Leadership**, and let us give you the tools to lead well. This training begins Tuesday, May 8, 7:15 PM and meets for 8 weeks. For more info or to sign up, contact Andy Rodgers at andy@therocksandiego.org or 858.268.1366 x2012.

Women - Come to Wonderland, April 28, 1 PM, a twist to a traditional tea party that will leave you inspired and challenged as you hear how God blesses the desires of our heart. For more information, log onto www.therocksandiego.org/eventcalendar.

Kairos at Valley State Prison is in need of 40 handwritten letters encouraging and showing these women God's love, grace and mercy. Other items needed: store bought cookies, 2 liter sodas, lotions, perfumes, toiletries, small journals, and hair clips to bless these women affected by incarceration. For more information, contact Latisha Zamora at 619.210.3522 or lrz777@cox.net.

For all other Rock events, please go <http://www.therocksandiego.org/eventcalendar/>.

MINISTRY PRAYER REQUESTS

As "small groupies," you are the heart and soul of this ministry--who better than you to lift up the Small Group Ministry in prayer? So, it's up to you, you can spend time in your small group praying for these things (weekly or occasionally), or you can pray during the week on your own time. And if you'd like to be added to our Pastor's Prayer Team(s), just let us know. John Dehnert, Mark Collins, or Paul Garrison, our small group pastors, would love your prayers! We send out a monthly email of their personal and ministry prayer requests. Just contact Andy Rodgers at andy@therocksandiego.org. May God work through your prayers mightily!

Reaching the Lost: Hundreds of people came forward to accept Christ over the Easter Weekend at the Rock! Can you pray for their new relationship with the Lord and that they'd get plugged into a church family?

Current Small Group Leaders/Small Groups: Pray for strength, perseverance, and wisdom for small group leaders, hosts, and coaches. Pray that the group members would continue to grow in relationship with one another.

Potential Small Group Leaders: One more week until our new leaders start their small groups: please keep praying for them. Also pray for our second phase of new leaders who will begin their training May 8 at the Foundations in Leadership class.

Small Group Staff: Pray for efficiency in work projects--there are so many details that go into our upcoming Small Group Sign-up Campaign; we'll definitely need the Lord's help!

The Rock Body: Can you continue praying that our weekend church population would respond to our Small Group Sign-up Campaign scheduled for April 28/29 and May 5/6. Pray that they'd find a good "group-fit."

MEMORY VERSE

Without counsel, plans go awry, but in the multitude of counselors they are established. Proverbs 15:22

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS – THE ENEMY BEHIND THE GATES

Okay, I feel like I'm taking a risk with this one, but hey, "no guts, no glory." Below is the classic and famous poem by the great 17th century preacher/poet John Donne. Read it out loud and then take a few minutes to re-write it in modern So-Cal language.

"No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main; if a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as if a manor of thy friends or thine own were; any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind; and therefore never send to know for who the bell tolls; it tolls for thee." - John Donne (1572-1631)

Those are beautiful words but they go completely against the exalted American value of "rugged individualism." John Donne was essentially saying that it is false and absurd to think that we are untouched by those around us. You can think you are free from the influence of others, but that just isn't true. At best, we simply get to decide who the major influencers in our lives will be, and that's what we will be focusing on this week in small groups.

Getting Started

1. Who have been the key influencers in your life? When I write "key influencers" I mean those who have greatly shaped who you are today. That influence may have been pleasant and healthy or hurtful and destructive, but it's influence nonetheless. Let me give you an example. My father was an alcoholic and he had huge influence in my life. I also had a Sunday school teacher in 7th grade who greatly impacted me. One of those influencers was harsh and hurtful, the other encouraging and helpful. The point, though, is that they both had influence in my life. *Again, who have been the influencers in your life?*

2. If you didn't already do this, think back again about the influencers in your life and decide two things:
 - a. Who brought out the best in you? (Best doesn't necessarily mean pleasant.)
 - b. Who brought out the worst in you?

Digging Deeper

One word used these days for deciding who gets to influence us is "boundaries." In other words, we get to decide what the boundaries are for our lives and that involves who gets in and who doesn't. We can decide who will be the current influencers in our lives.

3. Look at the following passages and talk about the guidelines the Bible offers regarding those we spend time with. Don't feel like you have to discuss all of these. In fact, you may want to use some as homework to study on your own.
 - a. Psalm 1:1-3
 - b. Psalm 26:4-5
 - c. Psalm 119:115
 - d. Proverbs 1:10-16
 - e. Proverbs 4:10-11; 14-15
 - f. Proverbs 13:20
 - g. Proverbs 15:22
 - h. Ezekiel 20:18-19
4. After reading these verses you might conclude that we should only hang out with "good" people. Is that right? Should we only hang out with people who behave righteously? Check out the following verses and talk about who Jesus hung out with. (Again, don't feel like you need to read *all* of these.)
 - a. Luke 5:27-32 (Matthew 9:9-13)
 - b. Luke 7:36-50
 - c. Luke 15:1-2
 - d. Luke 19:5-10 (Some translations call Zacchaeus a "notorious sinner.")
 - e. When you look back at those verses, who ended up changing because of the time spent together? How did they change?
5. How do you make sense of all this? How do you reconcile what seems like a conflict? The Bible clearly says to be careful about who you hang out with and then Jesus hangs out with the most unrighteous slice of people in His culture.

- a. Who were the regular, every day, influencers Jesus spent the majority of His time with? How might that factor into this apparent conflict?

Bringing it Home

The “big takeaway” of this week might be that you get to be the gatekeeper on who gets into your life and who doesn’t. If you follow Jesus’ example, though, the core criteria can’t just be about how good people behave. There must be more to it than that.

6. One piece of criteria might be about your strengths and weaknesses and how those get cultivated in you. Take a few minutes and think about this in two categories:
 - a. What kind of thoughts and actions make you stronger? What are the things that build you up? What are the things that help you grow and mature spiritually?
 - b. What kind of thoughts and actions make you weaker? What are the things that tear you down? What are the things that keep you from growing and maturing spiritually?

7. Generally speaking, there are two kinds of people in life: Basement people and Balcony people:

Basement people - These people bring us down. They don’t look for the best in us so they rarely encourage us to become more than we are right now. Often times, they try to involve us in their own negative or destructive behavior.

Balcony People - These people see us from a completely different perspective. They believe for the best in us and, as a result, cheer us on to become more than we are. They pay attention to our lives and encourage us when we need it to perform beyond our personal expectations.

- a. Who are the **balcony people** in your life who will help you think the thoughts and do the actions that cause you to grow?
 - b. Who are the **basement people** in your life who lead you to weaknesses, tearing you down and keeping you from growing?
8. Are there things you can do this week to get closer to **balcony people** and move away from some of the **basement people** in your life?