

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

Stop Chasing the Wind!

Questions written by Mark Collins

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

Small Group Announcement - The Small group team is so excited to see and experience all the supernatural growth over the last three months. In fact, God has blessed us with one hundred new groups since the beginning of the 2008. Despite His goodness the demand for new small groups at the Rock is staggering. Last month we had over 1000 people who signed up wanting to be placed in a group in their area. One simple thing that you could do to help the team is to allow us to post your phone number on the group finder on the Rock's website. This will help people connect to you much easier and help them find a group more quickly.

Maybe it's been a while since you have updated your information with us. We understand that things change like phone numbers, locations where you're meeting, or new leaders in your group. Right now would be a perfect time to update your info, and let us know how everything is going. We'd love to serve you any way we can. To update your information call Danah at 619-764-5120 or email her at danah.davis@therocksandiego.org

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. If you'd like to be added to our Pastor's Prayer Team, just let us know. Mark Collins, the Small Group Pastor, would love your prayers! We send out a monthly email of his personal and ministry prayer requests. Just contact Andy Rodgers at andy.rodgers@therocksandiego.org. May God work through your prayers mightily!

Reaching the Lost: Pray that all the small groups continue to develop relationships with those who are far from God, and invite them to their small groups.

Current Small Group Leaders/Small Groups: Pray that all of our Small Groups take time to follow up on all the new people trying to get into small groups.

Potential Small Group Leaders: Pray that our current leaders continue to give their ministry away and develop future leaders to reach their full potential in Jesus.

Small Group Staff: Pray that God gives us the favor and wisdom to rebuild the Small Group team. Ask Him to order our steps in every decision we make.

The Rock Body: Pray that the Rock Army grows deeper and deeper in accountability to one another.

MEMORY VERSE

“Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.” Luke 12:15

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS – STOP CHASING THE WIND!

A couple of weeks ago I finally heard the question that strikes fear and trembling in the hearts of most husbands in the Northern Hemisphere. Now that I think about it, it was really my fault. I was bragging that I finally had a weekend without plans, and that I was looking forward to doing nothing! I admit I didn’t see it coming when my wife asked: “Well if you’ve got nothing to do this weekend, why don’t you finally clean the garage?” She followed that request with an equally deadly reminder: “You know, you always say that garages are for cars, not junk.” I sat there in utter dismay, not only had she asked the unthinkable, my bride of twenty years was using my own words against me. I responded like any great man of God would, I pouted and complained. When that didn’t work, I got to work. After toiling for a few hours I finally had a truck load to take to the dump. When I got there I sat in a long line behind vehicles filled with computers, stereo systems, furniture, old appliances, outdated sporting gear and toys. As I inched closer and closer to where you unload, I noticed a bumper sticker on one of the trucks ahead that now seemed strangely out of place, it read: “He who dies with the most toys wins!” I thought about that statement for a long time as I waited my turn. Sooner or later, everything we own ends up here, from birthday presents to the golf clubs I just had to have. The toys that kids cried to get and didn’t share, and the stuff that marriages broke up over—all end up here.

Our culture is suffering from a new disease called *Affluenza*. Those who inhabit the United States are among the richest people in the history of the world, yet we hoard more than most. Check out some of these statistics:

- The average American shops 7-9 hours a week while on average spending forty minutes with his/her children.
- By age twenty, the average American has seen one million commercials.
- Recently more Americans declared bankruptcy than graduated from college.
- In 90 percent of divorce cases arguments about money play a prominent role.

Solomon knew what it was like to strive for riches. In fact, the Bible says he was the richest man in all the world in his day. The book of Ecclesiastes recounts his struggle to make sense of life when one is suffering from *Affluenza*. In Ecclesiastes 5:10-15 Solomon makes a series of insightful statements about possessions (I’ll follow up each statement with my paraphrase):

- “Whoever loves money never has enough” (v. 10). *The more you have the more you want.*
- “Whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income” (v.10). *The more you have, the less you’re satisfied.*
- “As goods increase so do those who consume them” (v.11). *The more you have, more people (including the government) will come after it.*
- “And what benefit are they to the owner except to feast his eyes on them?” (v.11). *The more you have the more you realize it does you no good.*
- “The sleep of labor is sweet, whether he eats little or much, but the abundance of a rich man permits no sleep” (v. 12). *The more you have, the more you have to worry about.*
- “Naked a man comes from his mother’s womb, and as he comes, so he departs. He takes nothing from his labor that he can carry in his hand” (v. 15). *The more you have, the more you’ll leave behind.*

Solomon's conclusion? "When I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun." Why do we keep getting fooled? Because we're constantly tempted to believe that this is all there is. So the real question becomes, "How can we make our earthly treasures last?"

Getting Started

List some people who are or have been incredibly affluent (and maybe even famous). How have their riches affected them? Would you say their lives should be emulated? What are some pitfalls that seem to always follow wealth?

Digging Deeper:

Virtually all of us in the Western culture are wealthy by global standards. So how can we combat the seductive illusions of earthly treasures? Giving is the best antidote to the *Aflunenza* virus. A.W. Tozer said: "Whatever is given to Christ is immediately touched with immortality."

1. Read 1 Timothy 6:17-19. How would you handle your wealth differently if you fully believed this?
2. Think about your life and the specific ways you're lured by the dream world of materialism. How exactly, does giving affect your material urges?
3. Read Philippians 3:12-14. How would a worldly critic likely evaluate the worth of Paul's life pursuits?
 - a. How would you answer the critic if you had the chance? Could you argue in the same way defending your lifestyle?
4. Can you relate a time when a possession(s) owned you rather than you owning the possession(s)? How did it affect your attitude?
5. What tips does Hebrews 12:1-2 provide to help us run our race well (Look back at Chapter 11 to see the values that the heroes of the faith possessed)?
6. What true wealth does God promise in Revelation 3:17-18 in exchange for the material treasure we give Him? What do the gold, white clothes, and salve symbolize in spiritual reality?
7. What do you think that God's attitude towards you after squandering many opportunities to become more generous? (read 1 John 1:7, 9 as you ponder God's response).

Bringing it Home

The longer I serve Christ the more I understand that Giving is a skill. And just as with any other skill in our lives, it must be learned and cultivated. In 2 Corinthians 8:7 God assures us that we will find fulfillment as we "excel in this grace of giving." With grace and practice we can learn to give more and more often, and give more strategically. Finish tonight's study by finishing these three sentences:

How might you go about training your heart to...

- "excel in this grace of giving" (2 Corinthians 8:7)?
- cultivate the faith that gives beyond your ability (8:3)?
- give eagerly, not under compulsion (9:7)?