

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

“The Truth About Spiritual Growth”

Questions written by Mark Collins

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

Small Group Announcements – Aloha Rock Small group leaders! You are cordially invited to join us for a leadership luau on Friday, May 16, 2008 at 6:30pm at the Rock church in room 232. Come enjoy a delicious Hawaiian buffet, hula praise performance, live island music, free giveaways, some advanced leadership training and much more! This is a free event to celebrate your faithful service to the Small Group Ministry at the Rock. Email Danah at Danah.davis@therocksandiego.org for more details. Mahalo! (That means thank you!)

Small Group leaders are you encouraging your group members to join the Rock Army? Your group can catch the vision of becoming a part of a movement that encourages people to become World-Class Christians. To join, check out the ARMY requirements at www.therocksandiego.org/army/

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.

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

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness faithfulness, and self control. against such things there is no law.”
Galatians 5:22-23

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS – THE TRUTH ABOUT SPIRITUAL GROWTH

One of things that I like most about living in San Diego is the fact that every weekend it feels like I'm on vacation. Frankly, there's so much to do in this area of the country, and the weather always seems to cooperate. The other day my wife and I were taking in the sights of the bay from the shore of Seaport Village, watching the sail boats making their way to Point Loma. I wondered what it would be like to captain one of those grand vessels. One thing's for sure that sailing seems to be a partnership between God and man. The only way that sailboat can move forward (unless it has an engine), is to wait for the wind. No matter how much effort the captain expends he cannot create, this power source. Leading a small group is a lot like sailing. God has called small group leaders to help facilitate spiritual growth in people's lives. Yet, without the "Wind" nothing happens. Ironically, the term for Spirit literally means "wind" in both Old and New Testaments. The Holy Spirit is the wind that provides the driving force for all spiritual growth. Although, as sailors we can't command this power source, yet we can't be passive bystanders either. Our job is to raise the sails at the proper time to take full advantage of the "Wind."

Therefore, discipleship and spiritual growth is a collaborative effort between God and man. It is primarily the Holy Spirit's responsibility to bring about spiritual maturity in the life of believers. Yet, God has decided to be dependent upon us, His creation. He has pre-determined not to do it without our participation. Every Christian is more than a mere human being, possessing a physical body. Each person has a human spirit. This is the part of us that departs when our physical body dies. Jesus' last words on the cross were "Father into your hands I commit my spirit" (Luke 23:46). The power for spiritual growth comes from the Holy Spirit who indwells the believer as He brings "What God has freely given us" (1 Cor. 2:12) in Jesus into full effect in our human spirits. Yet with all this power, somehow there's a disconnect.

Sadly, something is wrong in today's church. Check out these statistics:

- 84% of Americans claim at least a nominal faith.
- Only 4% of American adults have a biblical worldview and consider themselves growing in biblical principles (which imply that 96% live their lives based upon principles of the world).
- Only 10% of those who consider them selves to be "born again" have a biblical worldview.

Unfortunately, most people who call themselves Christians in America can't even explain what it means, or the marks of being Jesus' disciple. Some who have made a decision to follow Christ have simply not been taught how spiritual growth happens in the life of a believer. Others have bought into the myths about discipleship: that it's optional, that it's automatic, that it happens the same for everyone, that it's easy, or that it is achieved through an individual's sheer will. As leaders we need to dispel these myths and help others pursue a life in Christ. Spiritual growth is normal for the Christian and it's at the very heart of the Gospel.

Getting Started

Ask everyone to draw out their spiritual journey, focusing on where they are today (Are they growing stagnant, "plateaued", sliding, or coasting?). Challenge them to be creative, but not to spend more than 10 minutes on this activity.

Ask everyone to share their pictures. Ask a couple follow-up questions: How long have they been at their current stage and what circumstances or other forces have brought them where they are right now.

Digging Deeper:

Read each myth and ask the group why it's not true. Then read about that myth and go to the next one.

Myth #1: Spiritual growth is optional, and not something God commands.

The Truth: For every true believer spiritual growth is a by-product of the Spirit's indwelling in one's life.

Myth #2: Spiritual growth just happens. It's automatic if you just hang around the church, listen to sermons and attend small group.

The Truth: spiritual growth must be intentional. It takes personal commitment and effort, Philippians 2:12 reminds to continue to work out our salvation (this doesn't mean we're not saved by grace through faith, but it does mean we are to pursue spiritual growth).

Myth #3: Spiritual growth happens the same for everyone.

The Truth: People learn and grow differently. There is no program or event that works for everyone.

Myth #4: Spiritual growth is easy.

The Truth: Spiritual growth can and will be a struggle. The apostle Paul concedes and admits his struggle in Romans 7.

Myth #5: Spiritual growth can be achieved by human effort.

The truth: only God can bring about spiritual growth through His Spirit. Also, we can't go it alone. we need others in authentic biblical community to help us grow

1. Read Colossians 2:6-10. What is Paul encouraging Christians to do in this passage?
2. Paul uses four images of our growth: rooted, built up, strengthened, and overflowing which of the images best describes your walk with Christ right now?
3. Have any of the spiritual growth myths kept you from growing in your faith? Have there been other stumbling blocks?
4. Consider your level of spiritual growth today versus one year ago. Have you grown? If so, in what areas have you grown?
5. Read Galatians 5:16-18; 22-25. What does this passage say the Holy spirit does to help us grow spiritually?
6. What about the disciplines? How are they like "raising the sails" to the wind the Holy Spirit sends to help us grow?

Bringing it Home

When the Holy Spirit is growing in an individual or a group there should be a regular and consistent outflow of love and ministry to those inside and outside of the church. If there is little outflow of ministry in the group ask your group to consider the following question and ask God for the remedy:

What kind of fruit is the Holy Spirit producing through this group?