

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

Loyalty: A Key Ingredient for Authentic Relationships

Questions written by Mark Collins

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

Small Group Announcement – Save the Date - 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, live hula praise performances, live island music, contests, prizes, 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. For now, just remember to save the date! We'll send out invitations and provide more details about how to RSVP soon! Mahalo! (That means thank you!)

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

"Don't urge me to leave you or turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God." Ruth 1:16

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS – LOYALTY: A KEY INGREDIENT FOR AUTHENTIC RELATIONSHIPS

It doesn't take a rocket scientist to understand that relationships are the fabric of society. Yet in today's artificial world, where everything must be obtained right now, authentic relationships seem illusive. Over the years there's one thing I've learned that people don't drift into deep levels of friendship and community without becoming incredibly intentional about the process. If you think that you can fit deep community into the cracks of an overloaded schedule—think again. Wise people do not try to microwave friendship, they *cultivate* it. Maybe the biggest single barrier to deep connectedness for most of us is simply the pace of our lives. How often do you hear (or say) things like, "We've got to get together soon" or "Let's do lunch in a few weeks when things settle down"? Sadly, if the truth were told those connections rarely ever materialize. Probably the biggest requirement for acquiring true authentic relationships is prioritizing your life to the place where you have some unhurried chunks of time because:

You can't listen in a hurry.

You can't mourn with those who are mourning, in a hurry.

You can't rejoice with those who are rejoicing, in a hurry.

And most certainly, you can't love in a hurry.

One of the biggest differences between OT culture and ours is the value that people placed upon relationships. Maybe because times were difficult, people understood the value of interdependence and loyalty. Truly, it's a very vulnerable thing to need someone else, and it may require even more vulnerability to allow yourself to be needed. Yet, there's an incredible gift that can be exchanged when people truly depend on each other, and that gift is trust. Trust is achieved through a process of real acceptance mixed with self sacrifice. This unique and rare compound eventually becomes the building blocks of loyalty and love. Although there are many life lessons in the book of Ruth, none outshines and is more needed in our society than an understanding of how to cultivate life-long friendships. As I'm writing this I'm praying that you'll discover someone(s) in the Body of Christ who will "stick to you closer than a brother," for the rest of your life. Only then will you experience the fullness of true biblical community. Whether you know it or not that's what your heart is longing for.

Your Friend, Mark

Getting Started

Ask someone from memory to tell the story of Ruth (if this person needs help encourage other members to chime in until the entire story is told). Then ask the following questions:

Who has been most like Naomi to you - a person who, though not a blood relative, you would do almost anything to support if he or she was in need?

Who has been most like Ruth to you—the person who has stood by you in your biggest crisis?

Digging Deeper:

Read aloud Ruth 1:1-18. Both Naomi and Ruth faced what seemed to be a very dismal future. Ruth risked her life by following Naomi into a land which was known for its hatred for outsiders, and Naomi risked rejection for having a Moabite for a daughter-in-law.

1. It seems that the nature of friendships is the fact that they are tested. Can you share some obstacles that seem to always arise when you are attempting to go deeper into authenticity with someone?
2. Read Ruth 1:11-13. What side benefits are you expecting from your relationships?
3. In this passage (1:1-18) Naomi and Ruth exchange several thoughts and feelings that formed the basis of their relationship. To the following actions rank how you feel the members of your group offer friendship to you.

TRUE FRIENDS:

REVEAL THEIR THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS TO ME

Never Always
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

RESPECT MY WISHES

Never Always
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

SACRIFICE FOR ME

Never Always
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

ENCOURAGE ME TO USE MY GIFTS AND TALENTS TO BE MOST FRUITFUL

Never Always
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

4. To be a better friend to others which of the following characteristics found in the above question do you most need to work on?
5. Read Ruth 1:16. In your life right now, what would it look like to commit to “going and staying” (at least emotionally if not physically) with a friend in the midst of your other commitments?
6. Read Ruth 1:17-18. Can you give some New Testament examples of someone who demonstrated spiritual kinship that was stronger than blood kinship? What are some barriers that are stopping this from happening in your group?

Bringing it Home

Authentic community and relationship has been described as having the ability to know the joy of belonging, the delight at being known and loved, the opportunity for giving and growing and the safety of finding a true home in other people.

End tonight’s session with a time of individual reflection. Ask everyone to think of the closest relationships in their lives these days, one at a time. Then pose the following questions:

7. Are these relationships moving you closer to God, or farther away? Are these friendships helping me grow spirituality and morally, or are they producing habits and attitudes that are cause for concern?