

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

(Acts 2:42-47)

Making the Case for Small Groups

LESSON 4: Shepherding

What is shepherding?

It is not just touchy-feely stuff. God's plan for the shepherd is a balance of caring AND discipling – *Psalm 23*

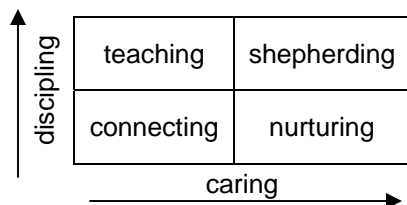
Ezekiel 34:1-11 rebukes the abusive shepherd and 12-31 provides direction, and John 10:11-15 identifies shepherding with self-sacrifice. A leader's shepherding reflects their understanding of the Good Shepherd.

Can I do this?

Even though Peter denied Him and returned to fishing, Jesus still desired Peter to "feed his sheep" – not as a professional scholar-type but as a peer leader – *John 21:15-19*

Later, Peter counsels other shepherds (1 Peter 5:2-3); it's hard work, but the benefits are worth it (vs. 4).

It's all about balancing Care & Discipling.



The **Teaching** group is focused on discipling. They set goals, memorize scripture, learn doctrine, etc., but they never really learn to care for each other.

The **Connecting** group has largely neglected both discipling and caring. They connect, have fun, are welcoming, but their relationships are too shallow to support real community. The **Nurturing** group is focused on caring and provides love and care but little spiritual growth. The **Shepherding** group gives equal emphasis to both discipling AND caring, providing good shepherding (care & growth).

Providing care is like running a hospital.

E.R. – small groups are uniquely suited to crisis care. Galatians 6:2-5 (vs. 2 refers to BIG stuff, 5 to small stuff).

Rehab – small groups are also uniquely suited to follow-up care. Others help at first, but the small group keeps helping.

Long-term – Successes are what separate us; in our failures we find common ground. If we understand this, we are uniquely suited to care for those with long-standing need. Acts 6:3 assigns this role to a small group.

Wellness – Ministry must be mutual and reciprocal. One may lead, but all members must minister to each other.

Discipling must be intentional.

Intentional Modeling – Follow Christ's example (1 Cor. 11:1) and set the example for others (2 Thes. 3:9). Allow others to see change in you and it will change their lives.

Intentional Shepherding – Seek spiritual transformation (Galatians 4:19). Example: the Five G's

- GRACE – When we understand God's grace, we extend it to others and desire it for the lost.
- GROWTH – Practice spiritual disciplines together and separately to spur maturity.
- GROUPS – We must experience both the small group and large corporate group connections to fully understand godly relationships.
- GIFTS – We must use our gifts to minister to those both inside AND outside the church.
- GOOD STEWARDSHIP – We must share our time, talent, treasure, and even our lives (1 Thessalonians 2:8).

Whether you use this tool or some other, you must have a spiritual growth plan that is specific and measurable.

DISCUSSION:

Do you think Christians can get by without shepherding?

What would be the hardest part of shepherding for you?

What do you think WCC is better at – discipling or care?

Share an instance where you have seen a small group provide one of the four kinds of care.