Why Member Participation

in a Small Group Fellowship?

(Selected Scriptures)
3/10/2013

Introduction:
The Devotional Journal is a tool to foster consistency & meaningful structure in our quiet time with God. Now we want to take this tool a step further. And use it as part of our small fellowship groups.
By God's grace fellowship groups (centered around our devotional life) will allow our people…

1) the opportunity to share what God has taught them during the past week;
2) ask questions they may have and receive clarity on important issues;
3) provoke further thought and discussion about lessons learned;
4) offer a time for prayer support
5) provide an occasion for Christian accountability

Why mutual participation? Why gather in a small group fellowship and offer the opportunity for mutual involvement?

Basic Answer: The Church is a Body. The analogy of the church being a "body"

Romans 12:5 So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.

What is the Anatomy of Christ's Body (His Church)?

- **a.** **God Designed the Body Parts as He Desired** *(1 Cor. 12:18)*
- **b.** **The Head of the Body Determines the Growth and Function of the Body** *(Col. 2:19)*
- **c.** **A Body is tied together with Unity with Diversity** *(Romans 12:4-5)*
- **d.** **All Body Parts Must Function in a Peaceful Coexistence with the Other Parts** *(Col. 3:15)*
- **e.** **No Body Part Exists for Itself** *(Ro 14:7)*
- **f.** **Every Body Part has a Unique Purpose & Function** *(1 Cor. 12:14-17)*
- **g.** **The Unattractive Body Parts are Often the Most Necessary Ones** *(1 Cor. 12:22-23)*
- **h.** **A Dead (or inactive) Body Part Contaminates the Rest of the Body** *(1 Cor. 6:15-16)*
- **i.** **Every Body Part Gives to & Takes from the Rest of the Body** *(Ephes. 4:16)*
- **j.** **The Body Grows when each Body Part does it's Work in Connection with the other Parts** *(Ephesians 4:16)*

** Member participation in a small group fellowship will provide opportunities for:*

1. Encouragement
(Emotional support) Ecclesiastes 5:11; Hebrews 10:24

2. Interaction
(Giving & Receiving) Ephesians 4:16

3. Participation
(Service & Fruit-bearing) I Cor. 14:24-26

4. **Synergy**
(Accomplishing more together than we could apart) Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

5. **Accountability**
(Gracious provocation to righteous living) Hebrews 3:13

6. **Safety**
(Mutual watch-care) Proverbs 11:14

7. **Prayer**
(Sharing needs, gaining burdens and bringing it to God) James 5:16

The Format for the Accountability Fellowship Groups:

- Prayer (for God's Leading; the Holy Spirit's working) (Approx. 5 minutes)
- Humble and Short Testimonials:
  (Note: Everyone who genuinely received something from God can share; no one should be allowed to monopolize the time; It's not a teaching time and not a lecture time. It's a time of sharing what God taught you, did in you or through you. To God be the glory!)
  - What did God show you during the Morning Message? (Approx. 10 minutes)
  - What did God show you during the week (through your Devotional Time) (Approx. 25 minutes)
  - Did any questions arise from your Devotional Time? (Approx. 10 minutes)
  - Review Bible Memory Verse
- Prayer Time (Spontaneous praying as God's Spirit leads) (Approx. 10 minutes)
- Meet with your accountability partner to go over the accountability sheet and share prayer requests. (Approx. 5 minutes)

Fellowship Groups are dismissed after Prayer Time. *You can then meet with your accountability partner and share burdens and requests. You can stay in the church as long as you would like.*

(Give pastor two or three of your choices for an accountability partner; We will mix it up quarterly; We will also mix up the composition of the small groups quarterly)

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Introduction:
The Devotional Journal is a tool to foster consistency & meaningful structure in our quiet time with God.
By God's grace our Devotional Journal will provide…

1. Direction (A Plan; Structure; A systematic schedule yet allowing freedom)
2. Consistency (A Routine; Regular time with God; Just as eating daily is important, so is meeting with God)
3. Accountability (to offer encouragement to keep going in our devotions and our pursuit of righteous living)

How to Use the Journal:

This Devotional Journal is designed to encourage a serious, daily time with God in His Word and in prayer.

It offers a guide to read through your Bible in one year and a lined section under each daily reading for your personal notes.

Reading with pen in hand ensures more attentiveness and is useful for your future reference of lessons learned.

The Journal also encourages one Bible Memory Verse per week as well as an accountability section for use in small groups or with an accountability partner.

A detailed section for your personal prayer list is also included along with other practical helps.

Now we want to take this tool a step further. And use it as part of our small fellowship groups.

By God's grace fellowship groups (centered around our devotional life) will allow our people…

1) the <u>opportunity to share</u> what God has taught them during the past week;
2) ask <u>questions</u> they may have and receive clarity on important issues;
3) <u>provoke</u> further <u>thought</u> and discussion about lessons learned;
4) offer a time for <u>prayer support</u>
5) provide an occasion for Christian <u>accountability</u>

Why mutual participation? Why gather in a small group fellowship and offer the opportunity for mutual involvement?

Basic Answer: The Church is a <u>Body</u>. The analogy of the church being a "body"

Ro 12:5 So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.

"Everyone (of us are) members one of another"

We need each other!

"Members" - this word shows the need for commitment to <u>church membership</u>.

No believer is an island unto himself. We need each other!

The dependence of the human body is exemplified by:

Eating -

You depend on your hands to bring the food to your mouth;
you depend on your tongue to tell you if it is too hot, etc.;
you depend on your teeth to chew it up;
your tongue pushes the food back, and you depend on your throat to force it down to your stomach;
you rely on your stomach to digest it with the help of certain acids which come in at just the right time;
your food then passes into the small intestine, where the nutrients are transported to the hungry blood cells which carry the nutrients to various parts of the body to build up muscle tissue, etc.;
then you depend on your large intestine to carry away the waste.
All of the above mentioned functions are essential for a healthy body, and all of the bodily operations work because of the brain.

Just as <u>no</u> part of your human body <u>exists for itself</u>, but for the assistance of some other bodily function, so no part of the Body of Christ is to exist selfishly for itself.

Example of my obligations as the oldest brother to my brothers and sister while growing up.

Salvation in Christ unites us to a new family. The church is a family.

The Anatomy of the "Body"

The Human Body is the Most Amazing Work of God in the Physical Universe.

The Word "Anatomy" refers to the Structure, Composition, or Make-up of the Body

What is the Anatomy of Christ's Body (His Church)?

a. God Designed the Body Parts as He Desired

1 Cor. 12:18

But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.

b. The Head of the Body Determines the Growth and Function of the Body

Col. 2:19

And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.

c. A Body is tied together with Unity with Diversity

Romans 12:4-5

For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: [5] So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.

d. All Body Parts Must Function in a Peaceful Coexistence with the Other Parts

Col. 3:15

And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.

e. No Body Part Exists for Itself

Ro 14:7 For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.

f. Every Body Part has a Unique Purpose & Function

1 Cor. 12:14-17

For the body is not one member, but many. [15] If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? [16] And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? [17] If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling?

g. The Unattractive Body Parts are Often the Most Necessary Ones

1 Cor. 12:22-23

Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: [23] And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness.

h. A Dead (or inactive) Body Part Contaminates the Rest of the Body

1 Cor. 6:15-16

Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid. [16] What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh.

1Co 5:6 Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?

Ga 5:9 A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.

i. Every Body Part Gives to & Takes from the Rest of the Body

Ephes. 4:16

From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

j. The Body Grows when each Body Part does it's Work in Connection with the other Parts (Ephesians 4:16)

When a Body Functions Properly it will

- Grow
- Heal itself
- Reproduce
- Fulfill a Purpose

Life Produces Life (It takes Life to Produce Life)
You have within you (By God's Spirit of Life) the potential for Growth and the impartation of Life

The Pastor's Job is not to create Life but to take care of Life

- To Provide an environment that supports & sustains life
- To Guard the Life from Sinful Contaminates and Demonic Intruders which seek to Introduce Infection to the Body
- To Create Channels to Let the Life Flow Freely

The Body's Job is to Minister to the Other Parts of the Body in Some Beneficial Way
Are You Connected?
Are You Ministering?
Every Member of a Church should have both a:
Mundane ministry (taking care of the Resources Belonging to the Body)
Spiritual ministry (Nurturing the Faith of Someone Else in the Body)

** Member participation in a small group fellowship will provide opportunities for:*

1. Encouragement

(Emotional support)
Ecclesiastes 5:11
Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.
Hebrews 10:24
And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:

> "Small Groups provide an atmosphere of encouragement and support. Many of us today suffer through various disappointments, broken relationships and failures. We all need encouragement now and then.
> Therefore encourage one another and build each other up… – 1 Thess 5:11
> The Greek word used for encourage is parakaleô which means to call alongside. When Christians gather together as groups, their sights are lifted from the depressing to the exciting. Testimonies of victories are shared. Failures are confessed and released. Spiritual gifts operate and encouragement happens. Small Groups weld people together into family units where the members work together to "spur one another on toward love and good deeds"- Heb. 10:24."

2. Interaction

(Giving & Receiving)
Ephesians 4:16
From whom (From Christ) the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

3. Participation

(Service & Fruit-bearing)
Mutual involvement & participation in the church gathering is evident in the N.T. church! People shared testimonies of the new things God was teaching them and doing in their lives!

See: I Cor. 14:24-26

Verse 26 teaches:
--Layman participation in the service
--Diversified types of service
--All with a unified purpose of edifying the hearers

"In a Small Group you have greater opportunities to use what you have learned and to develop your spiritual gifts. This occurs as you serve one another. Preaching on the virtue of serving others is important, but how many people put into practice what they have heard? Their question is "where and whom do I serve?" Sermons about service can impress and motivate people, but they become impotent when people cannot find a consistent context in which to practice them. Often in churches Christians can feel alone and disconnected even when surrounded by other believers. They have never found a small group of people to whom they can devote their full attention and care.
Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. -- 1 Pet 4:10
When you serve another person, your relationship with them moves to a new level. You are no longer just acquaintances but are now partners. We all need people to serve in our lives. The opportunity to serve fellow small group members during their times of hospital stay, bereavement or personal crisis becomes a joy for the member whose "partners" need help. The Small Group provides a natural environment in which we can rise to the occasion for others. Your faith will never be so energized as when you use it in serving others."

4. Synergy

(Accomplishing more together than we could apart)

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12
Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour.
For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up.
Again, if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm alone?
And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken.

> "Jesus tells us in John 15 that we were chosen to "bear fruit". Each of us has a part to play in being salt and light in the world. Small Groups provide places where people can produce more as a group than as individuals. Productivity in a Small Group is not simply adding the efforts of one person to the efforts
> of another. In partnership the work increases at an exponential rate. The product of two people is not
> equal to their efforts added together. Partnership causes multiplication. This is the concept of synergy
> – the sum of the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.
> This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit , showing yourselves
> to be my disciples. – John 15:8
> People in Small Groups set goals and then pool their resources and energies to accomplish those goals.
> You can do more for the Lord as part of a group than by yourself."

5. Accountability
(Gracious provocation to righteous living)
Hebrews 3:13
"*But exhort one another daily, while it is called today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."*

One of the greatest lacks in churches today is mutual accountability.

Even the world recognizes the need for support groups. Alcoholics Anonymous utilizes the positive force of peer pressure, testing, and accountability to help struggling addicts.

The greatest support group is the local church!

We all need a spiritual friend:
--David had a Jonathan
--He also had a Nathan
--Timothy had a Paul
--Paul had a Barnabas

Why accountability?

--To provide a strong determent to secret sin
--to provide mutual encouragement and prayer support
--To reinforce positive behavior and faithfulness to commitments
--To remind ourselves that we all share the same struggles and that no temptation is the unique experience of any particular person

Obviously , the LORD is the One who keeps the believer faithful; however, one of the ways He works to keep us faithful is through the mutual support and encouragement of other believers. Just as God transmits the Gospel through believers, so He confronts, reminds , lovingly rebukes, teaches, and encourages through believers.

Accountability is needed:

a. To be a <u>deterrent</u> from sin
"*But exhort one another daily, while it is called today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." (Hebrews 3:13)*

b. For open, honest <u>confession</u> of faults & <u>Prayer</u> Support
"Confess your faults one to another and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." (James 5:16)

c. For Mutual <u>Admonishment</u>
"And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another." (Romans 15:14)

d. For Spiritual <u>Provocation</u>
"And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works" (Hebrews 10:24)

6. Safety

(Mutual watch-care)
Proverbs 11:14
Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety.

> "In a Small Group we are protected more from the plans of the enemy than when we are alone.
> Everyone has blind spots and areas of temptation that we do not see without the discernment of others.
> Small groups provide places where believers can watch out for one another and protect one another from falling.
> Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. – Acts 20:28
> As churches become larger it becomes easier for people who fall away or stop coming to go unnoticed.
> In Small Groups there is accountability built in. This means that our thoughts and actions are held in check by others. A Small Group provides a safe place for people to be open and transparent with one another. They are able to share their struggles and lean on others when they are weak."

7. Prayer

(Sharing needs, gaining burdens and bringing it to God)
James 5:16
"…and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

> "Small Groups provide places where prayer flows naturally. Many Christians struggle with their personal prayer life. While it is difficult to effectively pray for everyone in the church, we can easily pray for a group of believers for whom we are vitally concerned.
> I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven . For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them – Matt 18:20
> In Small Groups prayer is fostered through prayer partners; through prayer walks; by praying for an adopted people group or nation or missionary and by praying together in other creative ways. There is power when God‟s children pray together. As we „agree‟ together on earth it will be done by God in heaven."

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