

January 19, 2025

## Good Church: Good Groups (Hebrews 10:23-25)

*Good Groups grow a confident faith full of action.*

### \*HOOK – video of Chris and Life Groups

- We are not made to do life alone!
- What kind of groups do you like? basketball, book clubs, cooking together, exercise, crocheting, running – we have all those at Covenant Grove – people in Good Groups that enjoy those activities.
- Last year my daughter Summer said, “Mom have you heard of Blue Zones?” . . .
- Healthy social connections feed our physical and mental health, creating stability in our lives.
- 5 places around the world where well-being and longevity of life are the norm for the older generation.
- These zones have the most centenarians; living active lives and contributing to their community. Absent from the landscape – nursing homes.
- What do each of these communities share in common besides a healthy diet?
- Strong social connections within their community.
- Connections with community and serving others - shaped their purpose – vitality – energy in community strong connections, people served, community is a core value
- 5 zones: Okinawa, Japan; Sardinia, Italy; Nicoya, Costa Rica; Ikaria, Greece; and Loma Linda, California.

It’s about finding your purpose as a human in a strong community that thrives -- faith and hope.

- Good Groups don’t have to have beans and squash, they can include salsa, chips and homemade cookies.

Disclaimer No perfect group – Good groups are made of imperfect people.

- We are imperfect people learning to follow Jesus and love one another
- Some like to talk, others prefer to remain quiet. Some want to dive right into the Scripture others want to have another ice breaker, or play another round of Game of Things. Some like brownies and some think orange slices are dessert?
- Maybe finding a Good Group is your “next step” of faith – getting uncomfortable.

### \*Good Groups make me get outside myself.

- When my focus is me, my thoughts, everything is directed inward. Self pleasing
- Everyday it’s me, myself and I – my problems
- Self absorption leads to isolation and difficulty connecting with others
- Decreases ability to empathize and support others which then affects your relationships.
- Where do excessive “me” thoughts lead – excessive boredom and stress
  
- "The smallest package in the world is a person wrapped up in themselves."
  
- Self absorption absorbs empathy and compassion. My emotions take up all the space in my life, leaving no room for anyone else to sit beside me” Serena Sinclair.
- When I was going through my credential program for teaching, I did not go to LG for one year. Lots of teachers – you know how it is, papers to write, books to read, and you’re teaching students. Looking back – I would have been less stressed if I would have been in a Life Group and I would have had more peace.

*“To transform religious and irreligious people into Fully Devoted Followers of Christ.”*

- "The less you focus on yourself, the more peace you find."  
– Maxime Lagacé
- **In Good Groups you practice listening to others and seeing the world through their eyes.**
- Difficult to do that on social media – only get the nice pictures of everyone on the beach, at the theme park. You don't hear that after we ate hamburgers, then rode the Ferris wheel my kid upchucked in 3x on the way home. That was part of our perfect vacation after Christmas.
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- Good Groups I'm listening to other people, seeing the world through their eyes. I hear their hopes, and their struggles: with physical pain since they were a child, their son or daughter is homeless, someone has their reduced at work, a sibling has an addiction, a relationship is coming to an end, a family member has cancer.

## In Good Groups . . .

**\* I see a deeper, thicker theology in the people I do life with.**

- I see trust and hope in Christ being lived out in the day to day.

## Testimony by Dawn Hancock (4-5 min)

CS Lewis: "God created people to live in community with each other and with God. He believed that people can only reflect God's image when they live in community."

- Reflect God's image by helping one another in our time of need.
- When Brent did his stunt jump off a ladder at church and broke his leg in 2 places. I stayed their for 2 nights. First day 2 people from my LG immediately brought me 1) my fav sandwich 2) a bag of water and snacks that last the entire time we were there.
- A friend brought soup to our home, pizza
- Phone calls of people praying and checking on us as well
- I wasn't alone, our faith community was walking with us.

Where is our ultimate example of Good Groups in the Bible: Jesus doing life with His disciples. Life Group

We have to Reference Acts 2 Church (home churches)

Acts 2 Church <sup>42</sup> All the believers **devoted** themselves to the apostles' **teaching**, and to **fellowship**, and to **sharing in meals** (including the Lord's Supper<sup>Ⓜ</sup>), and to **prayer**.

<sup>43</sup> A **deep sense of awe** came over them all, and the apostles performed many **miraculous signs and wonders**. <sup>44</sup> And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had. <sup>45</sup> They sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need. <sup>46</sup> They **worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals** with great joy and generosity<sup>Ⓜ</sup>— <sup>47</sup> all the **while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people**. And each day the Lord **added to their fellowship** those who were being save

## \*Hebrews 10:23-25 ESV

*"To transform religious and irreligious people into Fully Devoted Followers of Christ."*

**23 Let us hold fast** the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. **24 And let us** consider how to **stir up** one another to **love** and **good works**, **25 let us** not neglect meeting together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Whether you're recovering from surgery, cancer, a divorce . . . hope is what you live on, for breakfast, lunch, supper. Problem HOPE needs to be replenished.

When you're going through it holding fast to the confession, hope, is difficult.

You need a fresh supply of HOPE everyday!

I can study my Bible, memorize verses say them aloud to myself,

- If I'm sick, going through it, I need Christ in YOU! To read a Scripture to me. To take me to coffee, to send a prayer message.
- I need Jesus wrapped in the flesh of a friend to share a coffee with.

### **\*Good Groups Stir My Faith**

- Playing name that tune, or reverse charades, or Pictionary
- There's a lot of laughter and some hilarity – faith connection?
- Laughter dissolves the defense mechanisms and tension from the day as you gather round the table for an icebreaker and snacks
- Laughter like snacks is an appetizer for the main course of reading the Word together.
- This week someone told me, "I love my LG – we listen to one another I learn from all the different perspectives."
- At one time I had friends in my Life Group from 4 different countries – learning experience.
- See and experience life through different narratives that take you around the globe. Places I will never be able to visit.
- Their life stories stir my faith.

Story of Jane:

- A while ago, Jane visited her home country and staying with her sister. One evening she told her family she was going out, didn't say where – she couldn't.
- Her niece wanted to go with her. "Aunt Jane" can I come. Niece is 15. Caught a bus, rode a distance, then got out walked, caught another bus, walked a bit visited a home.
- On the ride home Jane's niece said, Aunt Jane, I accepted Jesus as Savior.
- They had attended a home church. No one can know where these home churches are – you are quickly ushered to a prison cell for leading a Home Church.
- In this country, there are no signs for churches. As you walk the streets with a child who believes in Jesus, they will tell you which houses are home churches.
- A year later, Jane's niece led a friend to Christ and another family member has trust in Jesus.
- This sister stirs my theology – I don't need a commentary from a book.
- I see faith being lived out everyday in my friend's life.
- Sometimes in prayer my friend cries because Christians are sleeping. She prays that people would wake up and believe in the confession of their hope. "Awake O Sleeper and let Christ's light shine on you" (Eph 5:14).
- What does the Holy Spirit say to me, "Serena, stop talking about relying on Jesus" and give Him full control – of everything! Get bold in your faith.
- I have several friends that stoke a strong faith in my soul.

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- I wasn't meant to do life alone.

### Story of Horse: photo

Spur story: 10 we had a horse named Moe. Moe was medium sized horse not a Shetland but not a full size. Moe was a little stubborn – He didn't always move when you wanted to go. My dad and uncle had the horse out on grass in farm yard. One side farm house, 300 yards away was the barn. No saddle and tennis shoes I climbed on Moe to jaunt around the dirt road that circled the farm. I gave Moe a little spur in the sides and he didn't go, spurred him harder still didn't go, Uncle Larry decided to offer some help. He gave Moe a big slap on the rear – Moe took out like lightening full speed for the 300 yards – I thought He was going to run right through the barn wall – that horse stepped on the brakes and came to an abrupt halt within inches of the barn, reared up while I held on for dear life. My dad ran to grab hold of the reins to get Moe to settle down.

- "Was that necessary Uncle Larry?"

Sometimes we don't wanna move – we get comfortable in our routine, comfortable with our religion.

I need a good friend to come alongside me and say, Serena you can do this, Serena I believe in You, Serena I'm praying WITH you. Serena God's Got you! All things are possible for the one who believes.

Friends in Life Group spur you on to do way more than we thought we could.



### \*Good Groups Spur me to next steps of faith.

- Push me out of my comfort zone
- It was the faith of my friend Jane that gave birth to the idea for 5 Open House Prayer Days that led to Worship Night.
- As I thinking about the idea another friend says, "Why aren't you doing this." What are you waiting for?"

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- Spurs are made out of metal to get the horse where needs to go, no nerf spurs –
- Sometimes God says, “Hang on, here we go.” He gives us faith filled friends to spur us to our next step.

Evangelism friend in Life Group: person is a natural at sharing their faith. If they are nervous no one can tell. One evening at the park shared invited a young couple into conversation. Ask them if they knew about Jesus. It was a good discussion even though they were not interested.

Recently same person talked to a homeless man at Crossroads Shopping Center: Homeless man “Why are you talking to me?”

- Light offered – seed planted.
- My friend said, I just wanted to know how your day was going. The homeless man, defense system or protection. After the conversation ended the man thanked our friend when realized his intentions were genuine.
- Doing life with faith filled people spurs you on to be kind, intentional and have faith conversations with people who need hope.

### **\*Good Groups grow a confident faith full of action.**

We learn to dance together **Reminds me of: God, Son, Holy Spirit in relationship perichoresis.** **There is a beautiful Greek word** used by the Church Fathers to describe the **inner life of the Trinity: perichoresis.** It is a combination of two words: *peri*, meaning “**around**” and *chorein*, meaning “**to make space.**” Therefore perichoresis, literally translated, means “to make space around.” It points to the way in which someone or something makes space around itself for others or for something else. (dance theology)

### **\*Perichoresis: peri – “around” chorein – “to make space”**

**In Life Groups make space for others.**

... breaking bread in our homes, reading the Bible, serving in our community, supporting one another in prayer, caring for one another when we’re down and worshipping together corporately.

We help one another hold onto hope, stir one another’s faith and spur one another on.

God created us for community.

Every time you meet in a Good Group, God has a purpose.

- GROW FAITH, AND WALK IT OUT.

Are you ready to have your faith stirred? Spurred into action?

Typically I would have 3 steps but you would – forget them.

I have one step.

## Life Groups begin NOW! Sign up.

Here are our [11 Life Groups and LG Leaders](#)

Need help finding a Life Group or have questions. Let's talk!

Prayer