



## 2018 Summer Schedule

- **August 5 – Mission, Love Others (Prepare for Community)**
- August 12 – Love Yourself (Prepare for leadership), Part 1
- August 19 – Love Yourself (Prepare for leadership), Part 2
- August 26 – Love God (Prepare to prayerfully study His Word), Part 1
- September 2 – Love God (Prepare to prayerfully study His Word), Part 2



## WEPC Small Group Mission Statement

To foster revival in the lives of believers  
by bringing the Gospel to bear in smaller communities of faith.

"... in smaller communities of faith."

- "A small church cannot grow in membership without giving up something very precious, the basic satisfaction that everyone knows or knows about someone else. This intimacy is not an accident, since the essential character of the small church is this capacity to know and care about others." – Carl S. Dudley

**Are you known?**

**Are there people in your life that need to be known?**

- "...by bringing the Gospel to bear..."
  - This is our only God-ordained means of transformation and revival. All others are skin-deep at best, probably fraudulent, and poisonous at worst.
  - "The gospel is the good news that God, who is more holy than we can imagine, looked upon with compassion people who are more sinful than we would possibly admit and sent Jesus into history to establish His kingdom and reconcile people and the world to Himself. Jesus, whose love is more extravagant than we can measure, came to sacrificially die for us so that, by His death and resurrection, we might gain through His grace what the Bible defines as new and eternal life." Ed Stetzer, *Transformational Groups*.
  - Mary Rynsbarger and Mark Lamport, in a series of three articles, notice that within the church small group movement, there is a trend away from education and more toward relationships. They see that Small Group ministries today are building their hopes upon relationships at the detriment of biblical teaching. In their final analysis, they argue that Small Group ministries need to correct the pendulum swing back toward truth proclamation and bible study training. I would agree, but add that Small Group ministries today would do a great service to the larger church by acknowledging the Church Growth Movement influences within it, and take steps to advance Gospel truth and Gospel community.

**Could you explain the Gospel in 60 seconds to a stranger?**

- "...in the lives of believers..."
  - Application of the Gospel
  - Only teaching will not get to it. Learning to live it and apply it – there's the rub.
  - Loving God, self and others is not a cause-and-effect. It is dynamic.
    - Calvin: "without knowledge of self there is no knowledge of God... without knowledge of God there is no knowledge of self."

**Do you know how to apply the Gospel to your life?**

- "To foster revival..." (renewal)
  - The Need for Real Change. We need to change. Everyone knows that things are not quite right, and everyone has a plan for trying to make things better. A shepherd's role is to help others to avail themselves of all that God has provided to effect real change in the lives of believers.
  - Richard Lovelace (*Renewal as a Way of Life*): "All who attempt for a single day to lead a life centered on God and his kingdom will discover that they have a battle on their hands... We do not have in ourselves the wellsprings of a love which will delight in God constantly to seek to obey his will."
  - "It is essential for us to look entirely outside ourselves to see the splendor of God's plan of deliverance. Salvation is not so much a matter of doing as of *appreciating what God has done.*"
  - "We need to turn now to see how we experience the dynamics of spiritual life flowing from our union with the Messianic Victor. But as we turn to our personal lives, we must not take our eyes off Jesus and his kingdom."
  - "(Repentance) "is a Copernican revolution in which self is evicted from the center of life, and the Messiah is enthroned instead."
  - *Dynamics of Spiritual Life*, 223: "While many pastors try to use their own gifts and personalities as instruments of renewal, fixing the attention of their people on them, the clearest road to spiritual awakening in a congregation is to develop the independent relationship of each church member with the Holy Spirit, so that every parishioner is constantly looking beyond personalities and listening for the voice of God."

**Do you desire revival or renewal?**

**If so, what are you doing about it?**

**If not, why not?**

## Love Others (Prepare for Community)



A key theme of the Bible is that God is creating a people who belong to Him. He is not merely saving individuals; He is building a new community in which He is the central participant. He is forming a new society out of the ashes of a fallen and rebellious human race. The development of this community lies at the heart of God's covenant promise, "I will be your God, and you will be my people." God communicates the importance of the new community in a number of ways:

- **God is Triune.** In revealing Himself as a Trinity, God demonstrates that He is a perfect community in and of Himself as the Father, Son & Holy Spirit. Community and friendship are not created, but are foundational to the universe. If He were two persons, in Him there would be love. But because He is Triune, community is the highest form of life in the universe. Having been made in God's image, we are built for community and connection. When we live outside of community and interdependence on one another, our very humanity is compromised and subverted.
- **God Calls His People to a Community Mindset.** The entire counsel of Scripture demonstrates that God intends for people to dwell in community. God said, "it is not good for man to be alone," and created mankind to need more than Himself (Gen 1 & 2). Israel is consistently seen as a community that was corporately affected by the sins of individual members & that experienced a national calling, blessing and covenant. In the New Testament, Jesus expects that His people will rely on one another as members of new family (Mark 10: 28ff). The descriptions of the Church include a large number of individuals that constitute a single sacrifice (Rom 12:1), a body (I Cor 12), a building (I Pet 2:5 & I Cor 3:9), and bride (Rev 19:7).
- **God Reveals the Purposes of Christian Community.** God delights in being in relationship with His people. Therefore, the grand purpose of Christian community is to simply fellowship in and with Jesus. But the community also serves to provide support and encouragement to one another, to be a "city set on a hill" to the watching world, and to be the context in which Christian growth is accomplished. The fellowship of believers embodies the Gospel.

**In short... you need to love people. Do you?**

**What prevents you from loving people?**

## Small Group Leaders as Shepherds

There are several images of leadership in the Kingdom of God. Perhaps the most helpful image for the Small Group leader is the caring, guiding, model of the shepherd. This is a Biblical picture rooted in our Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ.

Shepherding, or pastoring, God's flock is not the exclusive responsibility of paid clergy. Instead, the New Testament continually refers to "house churches" run by lay leadership. Additionally, the "one another" passages previously discussed require lay shepherding in order to be fulfilled. In one sense, all believers are called to shepherd and nurture one another in Christ. A Small Group Leader is one who is particularly gifted in this area.

Once you have become involved in the lives of a few people in a Small Group, you quickly realize both the thrill and the terror of shepherding. The thrill is participating in the work of the Holy Spirit as people are transformed into Christlikeness. The terror comes from always reaching beyond your own capacity. The ministry of shepherding can only be undertaken in humble reliance upon Christ alone, heartfelt gratitude for His mercy, and sincere repentance for your multitude of sinful actions and motivations.

## Aspects of Shepherding

- Shepherding is the ability to tap other Christian's ability & responsibility to care for one another.
- Shepherding is the skill of knowing where people need to grow. The skill of spiritual diagnosis.
- Shepherding is the work of getting people (not necessarily giving people) what they need to grow. A shepherd connects people with what they need.
- Shepherding is the gift of helping people discover their gifts.
- Shepherding is visible caring through personal contact.

**Who are you shepherding?**

**How can you hone your shepherding skills? On which areas do you need to work?**

## Focus on System, not Symptom

The hard part of small groups is that they involve people, and dealing with people is always messy. We often identify certain people as the "challenging people": the over-talker, the insensitive person, the tangent-starter, *etc.* But focusing on the identified challenging person is unhelpful. "When we focus on a symptom, we are preoccupied with its cause or relief." Steinke, *How Your Church Family Works*, 130.

So what do we do about this?

1. Learn to see people, to read them and to know them. This is discernment.
2. The "thing" is never the "thing."
3. Stay in contact with everybody, but don't side with immaturity.

"In a congregation there are always immature anxious 'problem' people, just as in a family. Just as we head towards them in our families, we do well to do the same in the congregation. They will be less a problem if leaders relate to them out of logic and intellect, unafraid of the anxiety and not taking it on. Sometimes they are really not trying to cause trouble, but simply trying to connect inappropriately. Sometimes they are simply from an anxious system, or going through an anxious time... It is up to the leader to get a different relationship with such a person, one that is more open and less anxious. Often he or she will respond to this kind of a relationship by being less anxious and less of a problem. They may take a bit of time but they are worth it. If one can be separate, open, and equal with them, one can be with anyone... When this happens, the whole group benefits." – Gilbert, *Extraordinary Leadership*, 26-27.

**When have you let someone's immaturity derail your group?**

## Focus on Direction, not Condition

Two most important variables in group leadership (Stogdill, *Handbook of Leadership*):

1. Clarity of group purpose
2. Clarity of member participation

"Members need to know where the group is going and how they may contribute to group interaction." – Kirkpatrick, *Small Groups in the church*, 112.

Stop lamenting where your group is.  
Or even stop taking pride in where your group is.  
Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal where He is taking you.

**Do you know where you are going?**

**Do you know why you are going there?**

## Group Covenant

As a leader of a new group, it is crucial to help members think through and voice hopes and expectations. Talking through a “Group Covenant” is a helpful tool for laying the foundations for a healthy small group. Many of the issues that you will want to discuss include:

- How often and how long the group will meet.
- How much time will be spent on the various parts of your regular meeting time.
- Commitment to be on time.
- Commitment to attend.
- Commitment to pray for one another.
- What you will study and pre-study requirements.
- Whether the group is open or closed. Seasons of openness.
- How you will be committed to service of Christ together.
- Issues of confidentiality.
- When the covenant will be up for renegotiation.

**What is your group covenant?**

**If you don't have one, how will you create and agree to it?**