



GROUPS MATTER.

New Groups and Evangelism

Sunday morning groups are some of the best places for hearing the Word.

BY: *Bruce Raley*

FROM: *GroupsMatter.com/Launch*

Historically, the Sunday morning Bible study was considered the evangelistic arm of the church. Every group was created to reach lost people with the gospel of Christ. Their primary purpose was evangelism.

In recent years, evangelism has been separated. Sunday morning Bible study was cast singularly in the role educational ministry. When that view took hold, the primary ministry became educating people about the Bible. Sunday morning groups were relegated to a one-hour-a-week Bible study time, with a secondary function of ministry to members and prospects. With this new direction, evangelism was expected to take place in special events, revivals, worship services, etc.

There are some real dangers in this direction. Of course, there is nothing wrong with calling personnel or ministers to concentrate on evangelism. However, to separate Bible study and evangelism takes us away from the biblical model. Biblically, education and evangelism are intricately related. Jesus explained that everyone who learned from the Father would come to Him (see John 6). We learn from the Father through the study of His Word! Evangelism is a natural result of Bible study.

The Bible teaches that faith is essential to salvation (see Eph. 2:8-9). If faith is necessary for salvation, then how does someone gain faith? Paul declared that faith is gained through hearing the Word, the gospel (see Rom. 10:17). One must hear the message about Christ in order to have the faith needed to receive the gospel. Sunday morning groups are some of the best places for hearing.

Here is the pattern that continues to surface.

1. The gospel is heard.
2. The hearing of the Word leads to faith.
3. Faith moves people to salvation.

A Case Study

In Acts 8:26–39, we find an Ethiopian who had been to Jerusalem to worship. As he was returning, he was reading the book of Isaiah. In particular, he was reading prophetic passages about the Lord Jesus and His sacrificial death (Isa. 53). The Holy Spirit instructed Philip to go to the Ethiopian. Philip found him and explained how Jesus was the fulfillment of the passage being read. The Ethiopian responded by accepting Jesus and being baptized.

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1. The Lord drew the Ethiopian to Himself. The man had gone to Jerusalem to worship (verse 27). The only way one would have the desire in his heart to worship was the Lord had drawn the man to himself. Jesus declared that no one comes to Him unless the Father who sent Him drew the person (see John 6:44).

2. The Lord drew the Ethiopian to Himself through the Scriptures. He was reading Isaiah 53. This particular passage pointed to the death of Jesus. It spoke of Jesus being an innocent lamb. It spoke of His humiliation. Clearly, the passage drew the man to Christ.

3. The Spirit led Philip to instruct the Ethiopian in the Scriptures. Philip was called by God to be a teacher—a Bible teacher. The Spirit led Philip to teach a one-person class and guided him to the right person in the right place at the right time. God was already at work; He simply wanted Philip to be a part of that work.

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If we are to have the same kind of impact as Philip, then here are the actions we can take:

1. Be open to the leadership of the Spirit. (v.29)
2. Be intentional in our teaching. (v. 30, 35)
3. Teach the truth of the gospel. (v. 35)
4. Give an invitation. (v. 37). ■