



GROUPS MATTER.

The Benefits of Alignment

Is there any benefit if you align even for a short amount of time?

BY: *Ken Braddy*

FROM: *GroupsMatter.com/Feed*

Alignment, according to the Merriam-Webster online dictionary, is defined as “to change something so that it matches something else.” Recently I replaced all four tires on my vehicle, and it was pointed out to me that my tires had become misaligned over time. A regular alignment, I was told, would have prevented early damage to my tires and I could have avoided a costly premature replacement. Lesson learned. Making sure my tires were in alignment would have benefited me by providing longer wearing tires, safer tires on which to drive my family, not to mention the financial savings I would have experienced by continuing to drive on my tires for another year. Misalignment costs something. I don’t always see it right away, but there is a cost.

If you know the story of Southwest Airlines as told in the book *Nuts!*, then you know that the airline aligned its fleet around one type of aircraft – the 737. Replacement parts were interchangeable. Pilots were trained efficiently on flying one type of airplane, not several types. Flight crews could be transferred from plane to plane and they were always familiar with the layout and safety features of each plane because every aircraft was the same. Mechanics were trained to work on one type of aircraft – you guessed it – the 737. Southwest’s simple philosophy of aligning its fleet, employees, and customers around one type of plane has paid huge dividends for the airline. In fact, Southwest has consistently been profitable while many other airlines have gone bankrupt. Alignment works.

Is there any real benefit to aligning different age groups in your church through the same Bible study? Is there any benefit if you align even for a short amount of time? The answer is “yes”.

Benefit #1: It helps families have spiritual conversations. I grew up in a home where I cannot remember my dad ever having a spiritual conversation with me. As I got married and started my own family, I was at a disadvantage because I didn’t know how to begin spiritual conversations with my wife and kids. I often felt like a fish out of water. But if the entire church went through the same Bible study together, then as a parent I could know that the passages my adult group studied were either the same as or extremely similar to what my kids also studied in their groups, giving me greater confidence to approach them and talk about what God was saying to them through their study of God’s Word.

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Benefit #2: It makes regular training possible. If my church were going through the same Bible study, regular training could be provided since all leaders would be guiding their groups through the same sessions each week. Recent studies on the impact of church training suggest that churches with regular ongoing training grow at substantially higher rates than churches with irregular or no training. What is missing in a lot of churches today? Ongoing training. What's missing in a lot of churches today? Ongoing growth.

Benefit #3: It encourages participation. When a church goes through the same Bible study together, kicking off each new study provides a natural “on ramp” for people to get connected to Bible study groups. My church recently chose to promote a 6-week church-wide study, and three couples who had never come to an adult Bible study group at my church visited my group as we began the new study. Even as I write this, months later, all three couples are active members of my Bible study group! And by the way, their kids are also now active members of our student and kids Bible study ministries, too.

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Benefit #4: Sermon series can support the small-group studies. Most pastors are excellent communicators, and they spend a great amount of time each week crafting their message. Think of the synergy that can be created when a pastor's message supports the Bible studies taking place across all age groups in the church! He can reinforce key points, and Bible study groups can go even deeper as they link back to things the pastor conveyed in his message.

Is there anything wrong with not having alignment in Bible study groups? The answer is no, there is nothing wrong with that philosophy. Many churches have “Bible study silos” every week, and God's Word is faithfully taught, heard, and responded to. But is there a place for aligning Bible study groups at your church so that you experience the four benefits mentioned above? Could you take your current philosophy and strengthen it through aligned content, even if for a short season? My personal belief is that you might actually like the results! ■

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