

## Community Part 4

Essential Small Groups

*Genesis 12:1-3, Acts 2:42-47*

*Memory Verses: Acts 2:46*

### ELEMENTS

#### Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle)

Over the past three weeks we've looked at the importance of community. We've seen how crucial the care of our church community is here at Stone Creek Church is because without it we will not be able to reach the local community God has placed us in and sent us to. If we can't reach our local community we will not be able to have much impact on the global community either. We must change here so that we can change the world out there. We must be transformed by God here so that we can see transformation out there!

I don't want to belabor the point, but since this is so crucial and I don't want to leave anyone with any doubts as to what it means to be a part of Stone Creek Church, briefly lets discuss what this boils down to. And to make it easy for you, we've put it into a vision statement that is easy to memorize. **Depending on Christ we will reach our world with the gospel to see lives completely transformed!** Here in this local church community we must depend on Christ fully by making his word our standard of living. Authored by the holy God, it is his instructions to us for living. These are commands to obey, not suggestions to consider. We will read the word together, study the word together, memorize the word together, and preach the word to one another! The word of God is our standard and all other ground is sinking sand. We must also depend on Christ fully through prayer. Prayer must be our first response, not our last resort. Prayer must be our language of faith as we call on Christ to align us with his will and his heart. He can do what we cannot. We must also depend on Christ fully through authentic worship. We must see our lives as living sacrifices joyful in obedience not slaves to religious observance. We must spend time with him daily in worship as we depend on his grace.

We must also determine to be transformed through an intentional discipleship regiment here at the local church. Yes we have our own spiritual growth plans and yes we must commit to daily personal time with Christ. But as we will see today in the bulk of the message, transformation happens best in small group community!

And as we saw last week, we must be committed to reaching our local community with the Gospel of Christ. We must dedicate our lives to a cause bigger than ourselves. **Genesis 12:1-3**. We must go where God calls us to go and take the blessings he's given us as a local church to be

a blessing to the world around us. We must each one reach one. We must bless every home. We must care for the needy through care portal and benevolence. We must tutor the children that God sends us from Southside Elementary. We must serve those God sends us through Southside Soccer Club. We must disciple and reach those God sends us at Good News Jail ministry. We must commit to showing the love of Christ and sharing the Gospel at outreach events like the Easter Egg Hunt, the Trunk or Treat, and the Thanksgiving meals.

We did not abandon our home of 100 years on Third Avenue and change our name and build this building and set out on a revitalization and relaunching of this ministry here at Stone Creek church to simply wait for God to come get us while we seek out a mere existence. Nope! Today we celebrate our 4<sup>th</sup> anniversary because we believe we are here for a reason. We are here to be transformed through a dependence on Christ and to reach the lost around us no matter the cost! In war terms we will fight until the last man! We will stop at nothing to defeat the enemy. We will do whatever it takes to take new territory! This why Stone Creek Church exists for the Glory of God!

So I want to take what little time we have today to share with you one more thing about community that we have touched on but not really dug into in quite some time. Today's topic is the lynchpin of community in the local church. And I believe it just as much today as I believed it 22 years ago when I began full-time ministry. **Spiritual transformation happens best in small group community!** Look with me in **Acts 2:42-47**.

#### Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

The first thing we need to see today is that... **Transformation Happens When We Devote Ourselves To Small Group Fellowship.** Notice again in **Acts 2:42** and **46**. They were devoted to fellowship and breaking bread in their homes. Yes the met in the temple, yes they sat under the preaching of the elders... but they also spent just as much time, if not more so in small groups. We put such an emphasis on the time in the church building with a sermon... and yes, that is important. But we seem to put a much less emphasis on the time we should spend in small group fellowship. And I get it. I get the excuses. We only have so much time in the week and if we are coming on Sunday mornings isn't that enough. I get it. In Jesus' days they didn't have as much to do, they weren't as busy as we are today, and so they could dedicate more time to fellowship than we can today. But let me ask you something is that a sufficient response to reject something that Christ and the early church put a priority on? If there is a prescribed way to do church in the bible, this seems to be it. And yet, we are all in on buildings and sermons and worship services on Sunday mornings and all the while completely cool with jettisoning the rest of **Acts 2:42-47**. Nope! Yes, we are busy and yes, we have a lot to do. But we will

always have time for the things we think are important. If small groups are important you will re-arrange your schedule for them. **If small group fellowship is important then you will make it work.** If we were honest, we simply don't participate in the most important ministry in our church because we have chosen not to.

Look at how small group fellowship transformed the early church. When they met together, fellowshiped together, worshipped together, studied together, prayed together... then **Acts 2:43** awe came upon every soul and many signs and wonders were done. **Verse 44**, they had all things in common. **Verse 45**, it encouraged them to serve their community. **Verse 46**, they were glad. **Verse 47**, it caused them to praise God and they had favor with each other and get this.... God added to their numbers. When you are transformed you will transform others... and these people were being transformed through small group fellowship!!!! They believed in **Hebrews 10:24-25**. **They were dedicated to meeting together to stir one another up to love and good works.** They believed in the example of Jesus. Who though he preached to thousands and drew very large crowds. Spent most of his time in small group fellowship with his disciples. He committed to consistently meeting with and teaching 12 men and a couple of women. If Jesus believed that the only way to see the world transformed was big sermons on big stages... why did he dedicate almost 99% of his ministry to a small group? Jesus knew that the only way to truly see transformation in the lives of others is to spend a dedicated amount of time with them in intentional discipleship. They had to do life together! We cannot be transformed into who God wants us to be as a church if we are not dedicated to intentional small group fellowship and discipleship!  
**Spiritual Transformation happens best in Small Group Community.**

The second thing we need to see here is that... **Transformation Happens When We Commit To A Variety of Small Groups.** Now, after having made the Biblical case for small group fellowship... I want to make something clear that maybe you haven't realized yet. There are many different types of small groups at Stone Creek Church. What we designate as Small Groups are just one. We also have ministry teams which are small groups. We have boards which are a form of a small group. We have bible studies which could serve as a small group. We have d-groups and one on one mentorship and a variety of other ways we can have small group fellowship. My encouragement is to not limit yourself to just one type of small group. You don't have to do them all, but you can do as many as you like. As a covenant partner you had better be doing at least one! **As a covenant partner you have covenanted with us to participate in your spiritual growth through small groups.**

The focus shouldn't be on which small groups you attend here. The focus should be on how the small groups you are a part of function. A small group is only a small group if its primary function is to **Hebrews 10:24-25**. stir one another up towards love and good works in Jesus Christ. A small group is only a small group when it involves praying for one another **James 5:16**. A small group is only a small group when it involves a focus on the scripture. A small group is only a small group when it puts a premium on one another! We know we are a healthy church when every team, group, ministry, and bible study has these elements as a part of it. **Spiritual Transformation happens best in Small Group Community.**

### Application

The reason that Stone Creek Exists is to glorify God through reaching the lost by blessing our church community, our local community, and the global community! Depending on Christ we will reach the world with the Gospel to see lives completely transformed! I believe we have done a good job, but I believe there is so much more to do! So, will you join us? Will you join a small group this year? Or another small group? Will you take the call to small group fellowship serious? Will you prioritize church community more than your other priorities? Will you take one small baby step to be transformed in Christ this year?

### Conclusion

As we dismiss for our fellowship today, we will have a table set up over here where you can see every small group and team opportunity and sign up to be involved in a new way this year!