

Sunday 07/21/24 – Panama Methodist Church

Sermon Title: Chapter 7 “The Class Meeting: What Could Possibly Go Wrong” Sermon Series: (Part 7 of 8)

(Slides 1-14 will be listed in order throughout this sermon 😊!)

(Slide 1 – (Class Meeting Book Cover Picture)

(Slide 2 – (Peter Cartwright Quote)

(Slide 3 – (Romans 8:28)

(Slide 4 – Class Meeting – Chapter 7 - “What Could Possibly Go Wrong?”)

(Slide 5 – (“What if my small group fails?” with Picture)

(Slide 6 – (“Top 10 Ways to Guarantee Your “Class Meeting Will Fail” # 1)

(Slide 7 – (“Top 10 Ways to Guarantee Your “Class Meeting Will Fail” # 2)

(Slide 8 – (2 Peter 3:18)

(Slide 9 – (“Top 10 Ways to Guarantee Your “Class Meeting Will Fail” # 3)

(Slide 10 – (“Top 10 Ways to Guarantee Your “Class Meeting Will Fail” # 4)

(Slide 11 – (Video – Shallow Small Group # 2))

(Slide 12 – (“Ultimately, We Are Not in Control, but the Spirit Is” #1)

(Slide 13 – (“Ultimately, We Are Not in Control, but the Spirit Is” #2)

(Slide 14 – (Psalm 51:10-12)

So, in between being a High School Social Studies teacher and becoming a pastor, I was a Family Caseworker in Tompkins County, New York for about four-years. I worked with at risk males under the age of eighteen, and their families. I still talk with and am friends with some of these now men, and their families to this day. I do have to say though that some of the young men that I worked with were pretty wild. How wild you might ask? Well wild enough to get recommended for a Family Caseworker.

The one story that I remember as I was writing this sermon, that I had not thought about in years, was the famous snowboarding off the roof story. It was a cold winter, and I think it was 2007 or 2008. I worked with a couple of brothers that needed some mentoring, and the family needed some additional support. Well, these brothers could be wild! One day in fact, I got called asking if I could come to the family home on a day that I was not scheduled to do so. I was told though that it was really important that I come. So, I moved some appointments around to make sure that I could get there.

This story reminds me of this morning's Chapter 7 title that we will discuss here in a few minutes called, "What Could Possibly Go Wrong?" Keeping all names and specifics out of this story for confidentiality reasons, I remember getting to the house as I was urgently asked to do, on this cold winter day. When I arrived, I saw through the living room window that one of the two brothers that I worked with had an arm cast and a sling on. I remember thinking, "well he didn't have either of those when I saw him last week"! A couple of days before this, we had a large snowstorm, and I noticed as I looked up and over that a zig-zagged line of snow was off the garage roof by the family's house. The family also had an SUV that had not run for months, and I noticed that most of the snow was off of the roof of the SUV, the hood of the SUV, and the one side of the SUV. This

garage was not where the main driveway was, or where most of the cars were parked, so the family usually was not in a hurry to do the snow shoveling there.

So there stood the young man looking out the living room, as I just saw an odd zig-zagged line of snow off of the family garage, and some of the roof of the broke down SUV, the hood of the SUV, and the one side of the SUV. “Well, this was getting interesting I thought!” I then knocked on the door, and as expected, the mother of the two boys was not happy, and the uninjured brother had a smirk on his face. His smirk to me translated to “My brother is in so much trouble, and this is going to be great”! Within a second, the mother of two boys said, “Paul, do you know what my sons did yesterday”! She was really mad. So, I just calmly said, “Tell me.”

The mother proceeded to tell me that while she was at work the day before, that her two sons were excited that they had snow day from school the day before. Mom had to go to work, and both of the boys were teenagers. At some point early during this snow day, which if memory serves, we had cancelled all our visits with kids and families, but I had a good day that day making phone calls and doing paperwork. Well needless to say these two brothers during that same snow day, when their mom was at work were not making calls and doing paperwork.

I do not know when it happened, after breakfast, early afternoon, etc.?
Whenever it happened though, these two brothers thought that it would be a great

idea to go snowboarding off of the roof of their garage. When they told me this after the fact, I asked, “why would you do that”? Then the one brother said this, “We thought, “What Could Possibly Go Wrong?” So, these two brothers got the extension later out of the garage and climbed the ladder. Well one brother climbed the latter, and then the second brother. They somehow strapped the snowboard to their backs, and when they got to the roof, they crawled to the peak of the garage roof. They then sat on the peak of the garage roof, put on the snow board, then snow boarded off the garage roof, bounced off of the broken-down SUV, and landed on the deep snow in the driveway. Both brothers did this a few times, until one of the brothers did it wrong and broke his arm. Normally I worked with at risk boys for 6-9 months, but these two boys literally were granted a time extension to work with me! Sometimes in our lives we might ask the question, “What Could Possibly Go Wrong?”

(Slide 1 – (Class Meeting Book Cover Picture))

This morning, we are picking up on the seventh of eight chapters in the book we have been discussing called “The Class Meeting,” by Dr. Kevin M. Watson. The reason that we have a table and chairs up in the altar area of our church sanctuary, which is similar to the cover of the book “The Class Meeting,” is to show a potential setting where a group could have a “Class Meeting,” or a small group.

The quote that we are given to start our chapter this week comes from Peter Cartwright. Peter Cartwright lived from 1785-1872, and Peter Cartwright was:

“an American Methodist, revivalist, preacher, in the Midwest, as well as twice an elected legislator in Illinois. Cartwright, a Methodist missionary, helped start America's Second Great Awakening, personally baptizing twelve thousand converts” ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_Cartwright_\(revivalist\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_Cartwright_(revivalist))).

Peter Cartwright was a Methodist Circuit Riding pastor, who rode horses from church/community of faith to the next. Here is the quote that Peter Cartwright said about “Class Meetings,” or small groups:

(Slide 2 – (Peter Cartwright Quote)

**“May the time never come
when class-meetings shall be
laid aside in the Methodist
Episcopal Church”**

- Peter Cartwright

Peter Cartwright said, he hoped that we would never get rid of “Class Meetings,” or small groups.

The foundational scripture I chose for this morning comes from the Apostle Paul’s letter or the Romans. In Romans 8:28 the Apostle Paul writes:

(Slide 3 – (Romans 8:28))

Romans 8:28

28 We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.

The “Class Meetings,” or small groups that we have been discussing can sound scary if we have never tried once before, but if God is at the center of it, we can have faith it will go well. This does not mean that it will go perfect, but if we stick it out, the Holy Spirit will move, and I believe that God will bless our small groups.

All this said, the garage roof snowboarding story is what I thought of for our chapter this morning. Once again, chapter 7 of the book “The Class Meeting” is called, “What Could Possibly Go Wrong?” Part of this chapter, therefore, is telling us common mistakes that can be made when forming and having a “Class Meeting,” or small group. One way to not have a good small group for example, is going snowboarding off a roof!

(Slide 4 – Class Meeting – Chapter 7 - “What Could Possibly Go Wrong?”)

In the case of the two brothers and his family that I was working with, if try to snowboard off of the top of the garage, a lot can go wrong. What can go wrong in “Class Meeting,” or a small group? Some of us might have some fears and worries about this. Some might ask the question, “What if my small group fails?”

(Slide 5 – (“What if my small group fails?” with Picture)

“What if my small group fails?”

- **Some “Class Meetings” or small groups worry about doing the small group wrong!**



For those of us old enough to remember the Late-Night show with David Letterman, you might remember that he had his famous “Top-Ten.” The “Top-Ten” was ten things about something. One of David Letterman’s “Top-Ten” lists were “The Top-Ten signs that the government is running out of money”. These were not actual reasons, but the “Top-Ten” list was meant to be funny and humorous. I am not sure if Dr. Kevin Watson was copying David Letterman or not, but in our chapter for this morning, we are given the “Top 10 Ways to Guarantee Your “Class Meeting Will Fail”. We do not need a drum roll for these, but what are Dr. Kevin Watson’s “Top 10 Ways to Guarantee Your “Class Meeting Will Fail”? Here they are:

(Slide 6 – (“Top 10 Ways to Guarantee Your “Class Meeting Will Fail” # 1)

“Top Ten Ways to Guarantee That Your “Class Meeting” Will Fail” # 1



Ok, seriously, here is the first five:

(Slide 7 – (“Top 10 Ways to Guarantee Your “Class Meeting Will Fail” # 2)

“Top Ten Ways to Guarantee That Your “Class Meeting” Will Fail” # 2

- #10 – **Never Start One**
- # 9 – **Meet Irregularly**
- # 8 – **Turn the Class Meeting into a Curriculum-Driven Group (i.e. – *A Book Study*)**
- # 7 – **Make the Class Meeting an Intense Accountability Group (i.e. – *A “Band Meeting”*)**
- # 6 – **Select the Class Leader Based on Anything Other than Spiritual Maturity and Spiritual Leadership**

Before we hear the top five “Ways to Guarantee Your “Class Meeting Will Fail,” I want to reinforce this with scripture. If you can turn in your Bibles or Bible Apps to 2 Peter 3:18. In 2 Peter 3:18 it says:

(Slide 8 – (2 Peter 3:18)

2 Peter 3:18

18 But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

This my friends, is a big reason why pursuing a “Class Meeting” or small group can a great thing for us. Growing closer to Christ, and to each other.

So, with this said, here are the top five “Ways to Guarantee Your “Class Meeting Will Fail,”

(Slide 9 – (“Top 10 Ways to Guarantee Your “Class Meeting Will Fail” # 3)

“Top Ten Ways to Guarantee That Your “Class Meeting” Will Fail” # 3

- **# 5 – Allow One Person to Dominate the Conversation**
 - **# 4 – Have All of the Answers**
 - **# 3 – “Hide” During the Meeting**
 - **# 2 – View the Group as a Place to Gather Gossip**
 - **# 1 – Be Unwilling to Be Challenged to Grow in Your Faith and Be Transformed by the Grace of God**
-

Also, when many of us watch those television infomercials we hear, “but way there’s more”! This is because we were given one nearly in the “Top 10 Ways to Guarantee Your “Class Meeting Will Fail”. Here is the last reason, which is nearly in the “Top 10 Ways to Guarantee Your “Class Meeting Will Fail”

(Slide 10 – (“Top 10 Ways to Guarantee Your “Class Meeting Will Fail” # 4)

“Top Ten Ways to Guarantee That Your “Class Meeting” Will Fail” # 4

- *Nearly in the Top Ten:*
- **Do not meet for more than 1-1.5 hours**
- **This can happen occasionally, but try to keep to 1-1.5 hours**

To have a little fun with the idea of “Class Meetings” or small groups going wrong, I want to show you the part two video of the “Shallow Small Group.” Here it is:

(Slide 11 – (Video – Shallow Small Group # 2)

Once again, no one has to be part of a “Class Meeting,” or small group, but it is a great option for many of us. Just a reminder that after church this morning, I am going to be leading a short “Class Meeting Leader” or small group leader training. We will do this about 10 minutes after this service in the church conference room, and I hope that you can make it! We also need to remember that the Holy Spirit is what will make anything in our faith successful. Nothing that we do in the area of faith, either individually or in a group, can truly be successful without the Holy Spirit. With this said here are some thoughts called “Ultimately, We Are Not in Control, but the Spirit Is”:

(Slide 12 – (“Ultimately, We Are Not in Control, but the Spirit Is” #1)

**“Ultimately, We Are Not in Control,
but the Spirit Is” # 1**

- **All the concerns about what might go wrong cannot be addressed in advance.**
- **We are messy people.**
- **We are good at sinning.**
- **Something could go wrong.**
- **In fact, something probably will go wrong.**
- **But if we believe that the Holy Spirit is active and present with us, we don't have to have everything mapped out in advance.**

Here are some last thoughts on “Ultimately, We Are Not in Control, but the Spirit Is”:

(Slide 13 – (“Ultimately, We Are Not in Control, but the Spirit Is” #2)

**“Ultimately, We Are Not in Control,
but the Spirit Is” # 2**

- **We should leave room for the Spirit to guide and direct us each meeting.**
- **Pray for the Holy Spirit to show up in recognizable ways every time your group meets, guiding and directing the meeting and each person's life in between meetings.**
- **The transformation comes from the Holy Spirit!**
- **Watch what our God can do!**

As I invite our praise team forward, next Sunday we will go over the last chapter of our book called, “The Keys to a Life-Changing Group.” With this said, a

final scripture that I want to read this morning comes to us from the Psalms. If you open your Bible or Bible Apps to Psalm 51, I am going to read Psalm 51:10-12, which says:

(Slide 14 – (Psalm 51:10-12))

Psalm 51:10-12

- ¹⁰ Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and put a new and right spirit within me.**
- ¹¹ Do not cast me away from your presence,
and do not take your holy spirit from me.**
- ¹² Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and sustain in me a willing spirit.**

The goal of our Christian faith is not only salvation and eternity in Christ, but also growing in Christ, and living and loving like Christ. I believe brothers and sisters, that we have many great days ahead here at Panama Methodist Church! May it be so. Amen.