



CULTIVATE

Cultivating **GROWTH** in Worship

Scripture: Matthew 18:19-20, Acts 2:46-47, Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

Summary: There is safety in numbers and greater strength. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken (Ecclesiastes 4:12). When we do something alone and choose isolation. When we do something alone and chose isolation, we are limiting our ability, our safety and our effectiveness. Working with others is often messy and at times requires more communication and compromise but it always pays dividends. In what groups are you currently engaged? At work? In your family? Your neighborhood? Civic clubs? We are all better together. The church is no exception when it comes to the value of groups. Jacob had twelve sons who were so blessed that their descendants became the 12 tribes of Israel. Jesus had twelve handpicked disciples and one who was the closest to him and three who were his confidants and seventy-two who followed him closely. For a season sent out the seventy-two to do the same work he was doing in pairs. In Acts 2 the early church was meeting together in the temple and then in their individual homes regularly even daily. Groups are not new. Groups are critically important throughout history but never more than today. Not groups of division but groups with vision and unique missions! What groups have you joined in our church? Worship only? Why not begin 2024 prayerfully looking for groups within our church you can join!

Statements that guide the practical implementation of what God has called us to do:

1. Celebrating Hope in Worship
2. Cultivating Growth in Groups

What groups are you part of in our church? Everybody needs to be in one or more groups.

Every person who becomes a member of our church family is asked to make a commitment to our Membership Covenant. It begins with these words, “Having received Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior and been baptized by full immersion, and being in agreement with First Gulfport’s statements, strategy, and structure, I now feel led by the Holy Spirit to unite with the First Baptist Church Gulfport. In doing so, I commit myself to God, to the other members, and to the leadership to do the following: “I will grow spiritually, ‘By connecting and engaging with a Life Group!’”

1. Gathering in Jesus’ Name

Matthew 18:19-20

Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.

The Lord can meet with you alone but Jesus specifically calls us to gather in groups! When we gather for the purpose of connecting our lives and others to Jesus, He is all about those groups!!!

Healthy groups are a sure sign of healthy growth and multiplication.

What kind of growth happens in groups?

- Personal Growth
- Ministry Growth
- Church Growth
- Kingdom Growth

2. Gathering in Groups for Strength

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up! Again, if two lie together, they keep warm, but how can one keep warm alone? And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him—a threefold cord is not quickly broken.

3. Gathering in Groups in Homes

Acts 2:46-47

And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, 47praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

Thom Rainer (research published in his book *High Expectations*) states that people connected in a small group are 5 times more likely to still be attending a church 5 years later than those who only attend worship services.

Thom Rainer in his book *I Will*, made some very straightforward statements.

1. If you are not in a group, you are not really committed to your church.
2. If you are not in a group, you are, at best, a marginal church member.
3. If you are not in a group the likelihood of you dropping out from your church is high.
4. If you are not in a group you could be a Christian sluggard.

Groups within the context of the local church provide unique pathways for spiritual growth, shared ministry, personal accountability, life support during the most challenging moments, encouragement, fun, life long relationships and many more!

Our vision is best realized and our mission is best accomplished in groups not in isolation!

Get Connected in Groups

- www.fbcgulfport.org/groups

- Text **GROUPS** to 228-265-5020 - scroll through groups and pick one to join

- Text **NEXT** to 228-265-5020 - complete the form and check the box interested in a life group

-Go to the church app and click resources and then click "Find a Group"

Mark 6:39-40

Then Jesus commanded them all to sit down in groups on the green grass. So they sat down in groups, by hundreds and by fifties.

Life Application Sermon Guide

1. Read Acts 2:41-47. Discuss how group gatherings were a significant part of healthy church life in the first century church as it was birthed in Jerusalem after Pentecost.
2. Why are groups important to Christians who are growing and thus to the church?
3. How has your life been impacted as part of a group? What limitations are there for those who practice Lone Ranger Christianity?

4. What are some excuses people use not to join or participate in life groups? How can you help people see the value of gathering in small groups?
5. Who needs your invitation? Is there an opportunity this year for you to begin forming a group? What first steps do you need take?
6. PRAY: Thank the Lord for the simple beauty of gathering in groups around his name. Ask the Lord to guide you or those you know to the right life group in 2024. Seek the Lord and his will for your life and talk to him about hosting a group in your home in 2024!