

The Power of Groups

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I. Jesus Christ operated by principles.

A. Quality not quantity.

B. Multiplication not addition.

C. Priority not pressure.

D. Potential not problem.

1. The only reason the speaker is standing before the audience is because somebody saw in him potential.

2. Personal example of a teacher that communicated that she believed in her student.

II. A study of the power of groups in Matthew 18:15-20.

A. Notes on relevancy:

1. This is not what Christ would say if he *were* here—he *is* here.

2. The Scripture is relevant because it is revelational.

B. Context:

1. In Matthew 18:1-15 Jesus begins by discussing the significance of the individual.

a. The difference between being childlike and childish.

b. If you want to become a leader, you need to become a servant.

2. In Matthew 18:15-20 Jesus moves to talking about the significance of the group.

C. Audience's observations:

1. The value of the individual to God should thrust the value of the individual to us.

a. In group work the individual needs to be held in high esteem.

b. We need to act, not react to individuals.

c. We need to treat individuals with maturity regardless of their maturity.

2. Jesus uses an illustration with sheep and one with a child.

- a. Jesus does not ask the child to become like adults, but adults to become like children.
 - b. All of the Lord's illustrations are out of real life and use emotional tugs.
- 3. Jesus uses visual aids for modeling.
- 4. There is a need for individual attention.
 - a. The more mature one is always given the responsibility of taking the initiative.
 - b. The mature man will always take the first step in acknowledging a problem.
- 5. The scenario involves a series of relationships.
- 6. The group has a ministry that cannot be sustained by the individual.
- 7. The brother is saying not as I tell you but as I do.

D. Speaker's observations:

- 1. In verses 15-17, a group by God is to be a corrective agent.
 - a. The group has a responsibility for correcting the individual.
 - b. The group is a therapeutic device.
 - c. The group cannot ignore the man of sin who refuses to respond to counsel; they must excommunicate him with a view towards reconciliation for the sanctity of the group.
 - 1) We do not have enough people that will confront others with issues of sin.
 - 2) You never solve the problem by ignoring it—you will only face it in a larger way down the line.
 - d. Restore brothers in a spirit of meekness. (Galatians 6:1)
 - e. We have not begun to develop the therapeutic value of a Christian group.
- 2. In verse 18, a group from God's point of view is authoritative.
 - a. The group's authority is binding.
 - b. There is no room for mavericks in God's economy.
- 3. A group is a powerful instrument of accomplishment.

- a. To agree on something is to be in “symphony;” not only must you have two instruments which are in tune with each other, but you must have all instruments that are in tune with concert pitch.
- b. Acts 5: individuals must agree with each other but most importantly must agree with the Lord.
- c. Psalm 34—making the delights of another our delights.

4. The presence of Christ within a group.

- a. A special kind of presence aside from the presence within the individual believer; his presence in the group is a dynamic factor.
- b. Jesus Christ is not simply historical, he is relevant.
- c. It only takes two together to guarantee his presence.
- d. Two or three perhaps should be taken as maximal
- e. The smallness of the group is no indication of its significance or lack thereof.

III. A study of the church in Acts 15.

A. There is no such thing as the perfect church.

B. Audience’s Observations:

- 1. The person who speaks with the most authority in a group is the one who lives what he teaches.
 - a. Personal example of a seminary professor who gives sixty percent of his income to the work of the Lord.
 - b. People identify with living examples.
- 2. Testimonies to what God has done encourages a group.
 - a. They model the right attitudes.
- 3. The work of the Holy Spirit is magnified in others.
 - a. It is easier to weep with those who weep than rejoice with those who rejoice.
 - b. If you are impressed with what God is doing, you get excited about what he is doing in others. If you are impressed with what you are doing, what God is doing in others is a threat to you.
 - c. Far above academia, we need people who have the life of Christ reproduced within them and within their groups.

4. Many are given the opportunity to speak.
5. There is a recognition of the Spirit's authority through the church.
6. There is a freedom from nonessentials.
7. There is unified action by the group.
 - a. Discussion is not a matter of making the group come to your point of view; it is a matter of making the group come to the mind of the Lord regardless of the decision.
 - b. The group decision is binding.
 - c. It was not the decision of an individual.
8. The value was not simply the product, but the process.
 - a. Too few are not participating in the church.

Application Questions

1. What is the importance of the individual in relationship to the group? What does the context of this segment of Scripture taught on teach one about this?

2. What significance does the church have as a corrective agent? How does this apply to your own group?

3. What other benefits arise from groups? Where do you see these in your own groups? What do you see lacking in them? What steps can you take to make your groups more functional in light of the speaker's message?

4. Answer the speaker's questions. What is a group? What makes a Christian group?
