**Starting a Small Group**

**Holistic Missional Small Groups**

Holistic small groups with a missional heart beat are built around three strands of DNA, taken from Jesus when in answer to the teachers of the law he says the greatest commandment is to love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength and to love your neighbour as yourself ( Mark 12 v 28-29).

From this we can draw three statements as follows;

 We know that God loves us and we want to know and follow him.

 We love one another and we build a caring Christian community.

 We love a lost world and each one of us seeks to make a difference.

These become the three strands of DNA in our group. These three strands are beliefs that lie behind our groups and provide the reason that they exist. They rely on each other and, whilst a group could just have one or maybe two of them, when all three are in the mix then there is a sense of completeness and balance to group life as it has an upward direction to God, an internal direction to each other and an outward direction to the world.

So, let’s look a little more closely at this and see what comes out of this passage and how it underpins our small groups. There are four areas that we can explore in this respect.

Firstly, in this passage of scripture we perhaps have a hint of God’s dream, the Lord our God is one. God wants us to know what He is like and that in heaven is a God of love and relationship. He is good and He wants us all to understand that and to have an opportunity to love him with all our heart and mind and strength.

This speaks of relationship, of friendship, this speaks of God being with us in the hard times when life is really difficult, it speaks of God being with us in the good times. So church, in whatever shape it is found, is here to help us on this spiritual journey and to grow us in our relationship with God. Our small group plays a vital part in this as we will see later.

Secondly, it is not just a place were the focus is on us as individuals and our relationship with God. This dream is more than us just loving God, it is God’s dream that we might love one another, that we would have an opportunity as Christians to build community.

In doing this we show what God is like as He himself lives in a community of relationships as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Jesus said, ‘By the love that you have for one another they will know that you are my disciples’. In other words when we listen to one another, when we encourage, when we take care of practical needs we are fulfilling God’s dream, we are demonstrating real love and it is our belief that a great place for this to happen is in small groups where relationships can be built.

Thirdly, we are also to love ourselves. It is God’s dream that each one of us would be whole. Sadly, however strong we are, we all carry some kind of collateral damage from life itself. When this commandment says that we are to love ourselves, it is speaking of God’s dream of wholeness and healing and that as we participate in church we should be healed and restored as individuals.

Fourthly, there is another focus of our love here. When it says love your neighbour it is not just thinking of our fellow Christians but it is thinking of God’s wider world. It is God’s dream that every Christian could in their own way, through their gifts and their lives, bring a little bit more love, and care into our world and that our lives can make a difference.

It is our belief that this is what church should do and this is what small groups should do as part of the church – they empower you to love others.

**Helpful Resources**

Some of the key resources we offer in this area are shown below.

Small Groups – an Introduction

Empowering People

Help! I am leading part of my Small Group

Please browse our shop for more resources.