



Making Disciples through Small Groups

SANG SUR

PRESENTATION FOR FINAL DEFENSE

Problem



Many churches are declining in membership and evangelism is ineffective. Yet, there are many people that are interested in learning about God, but do not know people they can trust to openly share about their interests.

This study sought to examine how Jesus made the Gospel known to others and how the Church can effectively fulfill the Great Commission.

Hypothesis

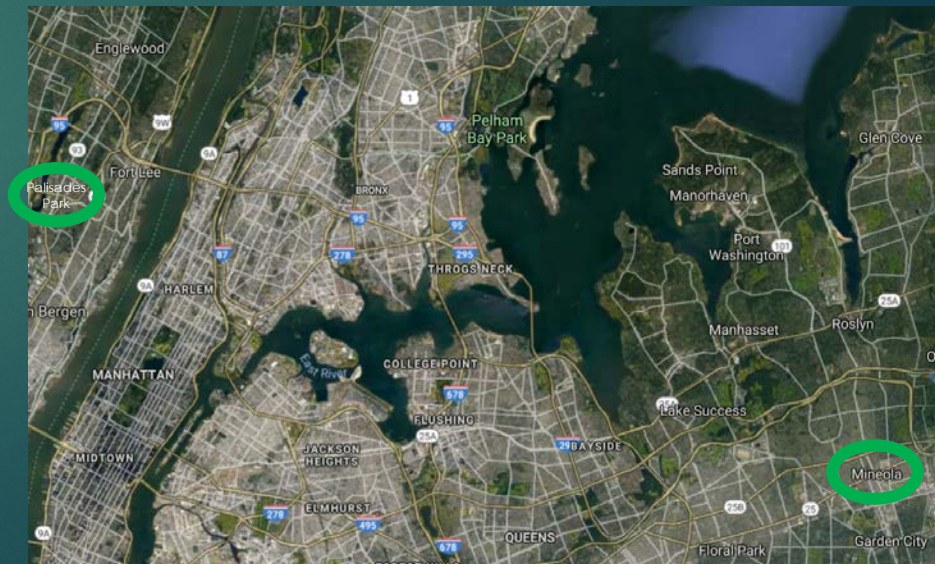


People that do not yet know Christ might be able to encounter Him (and His love) when they have access to Christian small groups.

In the Great Commission, Jesus told His followers "to make disciples."
In Jesus' life, He shared His life with few (discipleship) to reach many.
It is through life-sharing within small groups of people that people can come to know Christ and grow spiritually over time.

Context of Study

- ▶ Korean Americans in areas that are within close proximity of New York City.
- ▶ Specifically, two small groups of study occurred on
 - ▶ Nassau county, NY (Long Island)
 - ▶ Mineola, NY – Attorney Office of a contextual associate
 - ▶ Professionals and Business Owners
 - ▶ Bergen County, NJ
 - ▶ Palisades Park, NJ – Home of a contextual associate
 - ▶ Christian Leaders



Findings

- ▶ 3 of 6 not-yet-Christians showed interest in continuing to attend to learn more about God
 - ▶ One that opposed the church greatly now attends regularly, even sharing in daily group chats
 - ▶ On the last night of the study, he said, “**if church was like this, I would still be attending.**”
 - ▶ Last Thursday (28Mar19), he bought dinner for everyone.
- ▶ All Christians (contextual associates) stated they felt personal growth through the study.

The Goal of Research and Contents of Dissertation

- ▶ How can the Church meet the needs of people seeking God to help them in their times of need?
- ▶ Focus on the Great Commission – What does it mean?
 - ▶ Great Commission = making disciples, or building deep relationships
 - ▶ How? Through life-sharing with few people over time.

Structure of the Foundational Papers

- ▶ Ministry Focus
 - ▶ Church ineffective in executing the Great Commission while people are seeking God
- ▶ Biblical Foundations – What it means to “Make Disciples”
 - ▶ Forming deep relationships, life-sharing with few just as Jesus did
- ▶ Historical Foundations
 - ▶ Why the Methodist Church began – focus on holiness and community through small groups (called “classes” and “bands”)
- ▶ Theological Foundations
 - ▶ Church formed out of small groups, as visible from Book of Acts
 - ▶ Historically, small groups that gathered and prayed together changed the world; Christianity is made global today because of the gathering of the few
 - ▶ Modality vs. Sodality – Considerations for small groups independent of local churches

Project Details

- ▶ Two (2) small groups formed to test hypothesis
 - ▶ Christian Business Men - Members of “Connecting Business and Marketplace to Christ” (CBMC) group (11 Contextual associates)
 - ▶ NJ Christian Leaders – Newly formed group. Members met for the first time. (3 Contextual Associates)
- ▶ Six (6) Participants (non-Christians) invited by the contextual associates joined them.
- ▶ Collected data in three ways to triangulate findings
 - ▶ Pre/Post Surveys for participants
 - ▶ Weekly Contextual Associates’ observations of the participants
 - ▶ Post-study interviews with contextual associates

Key Differences in Small Groups

	First Small Group	Second Small Group
Differences	Primarily composed of businessmen	Primarily composed of Christian Leaders
	Familiar with each other	Met for the first time for the project
	Familiar with small group activities as already practiced	Familiar with Christian practices and administrating them
	Lives/Works in Long Island, NY	Lives/Works in New Jersey
	Little or No Theological Training	Theologically trained. Some ordained.
Similarities	Men	Men
	Fathers/Husbands	Fathers/Husbands
	Between ages 30-55	Between ages 30-55

Led to more personal/life conversations and Biblical reflections on how to cope/live.

Led to more time of worship and conversation about church matters. More time together may have helped.

Introduction of the Six(6) Participants

	Qualified as Participant	Gender	Age Range	Marital Status	Children	Religion
P1	Yes	Male	36-45	Married	2 Children	Hindu
P2	Yes	Male	56-65	Married	0	None
P3	Yes	Male	26-35	Single	0	Christian
P4	Yes	Male	46-55	Married	2 Children 12 and 9 years old	Catholic
P5	Yes	Male	26-35	Single	0	Christian
P6	Yes	Male	36-45	Married	1 3 years old	Atheist



Did not attend church regularly for at least six months

Findings based on responses of six (6) participants

- ▶ Small groups may have a positive effect in connecting observers to see relevancy of Christianity to life. This benefit may be enhanced or reduced by other factors such as group dynamics or initial viewpoints. (Q1 – Christianity relevant to life?)
- ▶ Involvement in small groups may encourage people to think more about God and bigger picture of God's plans for them (Q3, Desire to know God?)
- ▶ Small groups provide venue for anyone interested in learning more about God to share lives and do so with Christians (Q4, Comfort in sharing lives with other Christians)

Findings based on responses of six (6) participants

- ▶ Small groups provide environment away from the stigmatized view of church services. It provides a more relaxing setting where relationships can be made (Q5, Comfort in Christian Gatherings)
- ▶ Building relationships take time. It requires commitment to continue to take part in fellowships to benefit through small groups (Q6, Value of Christian Friends)
- ▶ Reason why people do not attend Christian churches is because of another belief (or lack of it) and because of the negative perceptions of the Christian church and the people in it. (Q7 Pre-Questionnaire)

Findings based on responses of six (6) participants

- ▶ Reason why Christianity is not attractive is because Christians are often nominal and are no different than people who are not Christians. People are looking to Christians to show a difference in 1) what they believe, and 2) how they live. (Q8 Pre-Questionnaire)
- ▶ Christianity is attractive when messages and discussions are relevant to everyday living. Finding acceptance and having an environment of trust to share openly is also attractive. Discouragements are the opposite: judgmental and dogmatic people/environment. (Q7 Post-Questionnaire)
- ▶ All participants stated that small groups were good experiences for them. Though some aspects of the meeting were less comfortable, such as time of prayer, the participants recognized they were not forced to do anything and felt welcome simply to observe the activity. (Q8 Post-Questionnaire)

Conclusions:

What Makes Small Groups Work?

(What are reasons why some churches are declining in numbers and unable to “evangelize”)

- ▶ Life-sharing (Basis of discipleship)
- ▶ Similarities of Life, Pursuit, and Location
- ▶ Meets over time and does not give up on each other (*Love is **patient***)
- ▶ Christians are also “in the world”

Conclusions: Effective Roles of Pastors

- ▶ Brokers of Conversations
 - ▶ Available people for others
- ▶ Coach Others
 - ▶ Bring out the inner drive of others
- ▶ Building Leaders (of small groups)
 - ▶ Teach others to do what modern pastors do today

Conclusions: How does Power Evangelism Fit into Small Group Discipleship?

- ▶ Healings, Deliverances, and Miracles
 - ▶ Shows God's love toward people
 - ▶ Demonstrate God
- ▶ Love (discipleship, life-sharing, relationships) is the foundation to experience God and show same to others
 - ▶ Healings, Deliverances, and Miracles should be sought AFTER such foundations are established.
 - ▶ Mission fields
 - ▶ Churches

On judgment day many will say to me, 'Lord! Lord! We prophesied in your name and cast out demons in your name and performed many miracles in your name.' But I will reply, 'I never knew you. Get away from me, you who break God's laws.' – Matthew 7:21-23

In John 6, people are following Jesus seeking miracles (c.f. John 6:2, 24, 30) because they have seen many healings (c.f. John 6:2) and other miracles such as being fed much with little (c.f. John 6:14, 26). When Jesus teaches them the Truth and asks them for faith in God, many people, including those that have seen miracles and healings leaves Jesus (c.f. John 6:66). However, the people that remain were those with whom Jesus had life-on-life discipleship relationships (c.f. John 6:68-69).

Other Conclusions:

- ▶ Why Small Groups may be Helpful to the World Today
 - ▶ Welcoming Openness, in the midst of the busy, hectic world
 - ▶ Christianity is relevant to everyday living
- ▶ Some Challenges for Small Groups to Overcome
 - ▶ New Participants will be a disruption to the small group
 - ▶ Strong Commitment required by at least three people to be considered an ongoing small group
- ▶ Key Benefits of Small Groups
 - ▶ One's involvement affects everyone around them for good

Potential Future Studies

- ▶ How can small groups be run with women, children, and or entire families?
- ▶ What factors make it difficult for Christian leaders to spend time with others?
- ▶ How can churches be organized to make small groups a foundation like the first churches?
- ▶ How can mission fields benefit from teaching locals to form small groups, especially prior to introducing healings, miracles, and deliverances?