

## **LIFE Group Leader Handout**

May 17, 2020

### ***Start with Why, Part 1 of the True Normal Series***

Pastor Mike O'Connor

#### ***Scripture--Romans 12:1***

*I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.*

#### **Main Idea--The Apostle Paul in Romans 12:1 Appeals for Us to Make a Bold Life Move--Chapters 1-11 Provide the "Why."**

The Theme of the Book of Romans:

*For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith." (Romans 1:16-17)*

Three "Therefore's"

#1 Romans 3:20

*Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin. (NIV)*

#2 Romans 5:1

*Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

#3 Romans 8:1

*There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*

Therefore...

- It is not about feelings or experiences
- It is not about background/ethnicity/race/ culture/family of origin--but the family of adoption
- Not about our works for God but his love-motivated sacrifice for us

#### ***Application--***

"Therefore" takes us back to powerful truths in Romans 1-11. Which of these is most important for me right now?

- Overcoming my negative feelings, or relying on feelings rather than truth
- Overcoming my unholy focus on background/ethnicity/race/ culture/family of origin
- Overcoming my tendency to rely on what I do for God more than faith in what he did for me

Pastor Mike spoke about the difference between condemning thoughts and convicting thoughts. How does Romans 8:1: *There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus* help me with condemning thoughts?

# God's Foundation for Small-Group Ministry

*By Seth Widner*

## **A Sneak Peek at the Early Church**

Acts 2:42 says, *"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer."* What does it mean to be devoted to something? The word refers to continuing steadfastly. If a group of people is going to experience lasting friendships, each person must be fully devoted. You are either all in or all out. In God's design for community, there is no room for middle ground. Close friendships are not established by chance. They require deep devotion.

## **Four Devotions We Must Share**

According to Acts 2:42, the early Christians expressed deep devotion to Christ and one another. But how? Within this verse, we clearly see four devotions, or patterns, that were commonly shared by the early Church. These devotions were not an array of options to be selected. Each devotion laid the foundation for their daily lives. They established commonly shared practices that would unite them in friendship and purpose.

**Apostles' Teaching** - In the early days of the Church, the apostles were the spiritual leaders. Jesus invested much time in teaching them about his desire for people as they walked with him in his ministry. Their teachings consisted of the lessons Jesus had shared with them. The apostles would link the Old Testament with Christ's purpose and ministry. The New Testament had yet to be finished, so the apostles' teaching provided the spiritual map for the early Christians to follow. And they faithfully devoted themselves to it.

Today we have the whole Bible, the completed gift of God's Word. What a blessing! So we follow the apostles' teaching by learning from both the Old and New Testaments. Just like the early church, our small groups must be fully devoted to God's Word. We must read it, meditate on it, obey it, and share it with one another.

**Fellowship** - The early church enjoyed spending time together, and they gathered consistently. Hebrews 10:24–25a says, *"And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another."* It is important for small-group members to be fully devoted to group gatherings. We must continue meeting steadfastly. When people show up, it brings encouragement to the leader and members. It also paves the way for lasting friendships to be shared. Quality time always comes from quantity time.

**Breaking of Bread** - This phrase applied to sharing the Lord's Supper (Communion) and common meals. Something special happens when we share a meal with friends! It seems to open the door into a deeper understanding of one another. As we eat, we share about our life experiences. We learn about our dreams, hopes, passions, failures, fears, struggles, and victories. Whether it is the Lord's Supper or a common meal, Christ is there with us. By sharing a meal, we have the opportunity to grow closer to God and one another.

**Prayer** - The early Christians talked to God, both individually and together. They prayed for and with one another. It is important for us to follow their example today. Some leaders may feel nervous about praying together because some group members aren't comfortable praying out loud. It's okay! New practices always feel awkward at first. Find out who is comfortable praying out loud and have them begin. You don't have to force people to pray out loud if they are scared. Just don't neglect to pray because of members' fear. Although every Christian isn't comfortable praying out loud, all Christians want to be prayed for.

**Unlocking Biblical Community** - When our small groups live out these four devotions, we unlock the door to biblical community. God has designed these practices to draw us closer in our friendship with Him and with one another. No matter what style of small group you lead, each of these devotions must be commonly shared by group members. I want to encourage you to incorporate each one. Be intentional. You'll love the difference it will make. For God's design always rings true.