

Why we use the sermon in small groups

We are after transformation.

Information plus application equals transformation. We have found over 30 years (confirmed with a lot of input) that to hear a biblical message on Sunday and then deal with totally different content later that day (some groups meet on Sunday night) or even three days later is not beneficial for a focus leading to lasting change.

We want to move together as a family.

We believe God most often moves his people together. When we are all together it has helped keep the “Heart Attitudes” more fully in play in our lives.

We want to engage the “Whole Counsel of God.”

“For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God.” Acts 20:27

To stay together in line with the sermon series helps us keep from chasing trends and personal “felt needs”. Often when group leaders choose topics, it can be based on current trends and “felt needs”...either their own or the perceived needs of their group. This is not always bad, but it is often not good either. We take a multi-year approach to looking at a variety of Biblical topics and books from the Old and New Testament. This helps us over time develop and maintain a broader scope of Biblical understanding and application.

We encourage flexibility and creativity in the way leaders lead their groups.

The sermon series provides the boundaries, but there is a lot of room for diversity within those boundaries. You can use the study guide that is provided (many do) or not. Some group leaders come up with their own questions related to the sermon. There is no topic of Scripture that could not provide enough powerful, thought-provoking and life-changing content for a small group study.

**While our church body studies the sermons together during most of the year, there is flexibility in the summer months. Groups adapt their meetings in the summer as many people’s availability changes. Some group leaders will choose to study a different topic, while other groups do not do a study in the summer and meet primarily to connect.*

We want to produce full-time followers of Christ.

The group leader’s primary goal is to reproduce followers of Christ. Leading group “content” is just one part of this. We have found that when multiple group leaders are doing lots of individual study on their own then what suffers is “life on life” ministry. This is a poor stewardship of time. If I can do a lot of work on content in order that many leaders can do a lot of work investing in people, then that is good stewardship. I spend 6 to 18 months praying over and selecting a topic, reading multiply commentaries, talking to others. Group leaders obviously cannot devote this much time to discerning God’s will for topics.

We want life on life investment.

Life on life mentoring can be “tailored” to meet individual needs. A group leader may recommend a certain book or theme to one group member and another to a different member. Small group meetings are designed to connect with the entire group, not just an individual. There is opportunity in many other ways to focus on felt needs in the lives of individuals.

We want to be faithful to the “Heart Attitudes”

One of our 7 heart attitudes is to follow leadership within biblical limits. We are never “heavy handed” or demanding in this, but we do ask group leaders to be willing to follow leadership that is not out of line with what the Bible teaches.