



# TRUTH MATTERS

A Newsletter Discussing Matters Related to Truth Because Truth Matters

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## Instruments in the Redeemers Hands

*People in Need of Change Helping People in Need of Change*<sup>1</sup>

What God has ordained for his church is both wonderful and sobering. It is wonderful because he is a jealous and determined God. His work in his people will not fail, but will continue until it is completed. It is sobering because this work follows an “all of my people, all of the time” model.

Many of us would be relieved if God had placed our sanctification in the hands of trained and paid professionals, but that simply is not the biblical model. God’s plan is that through the faithful ministry of every part, the whole body will grow to full maturity in Christ. The leaders of his church have been gifted, positioned, and appointed to train and mobilize the people of God for this “every person, everyday” ministry lifestyle.

The paradigm is simple: when God calls you to himself, he also calls you to be a servant, an instrument in his redeeming hands. All of his children are called into ministry, and each of them needs the daily intervention this ministry provides. If you followed the Lord for a thousand years, you would still need the ministry of the body of Christ as much as you did the day you first believed. This need will remain until our sanctification is complete in Glory.

...God uses people, who are themselves in need of change, as instruments of the same kind of change in others. ... [The] goal is not just that people’s lives would be changed as they give help and receive it. The goal is to help change the church’s very culture.

I am persuaded that the church today has many more consumers than committed participants. Sure, Joe and Sheila may volunteer for a specific activity like VBS or a diaconal project, but this frequently falls woefully short of the “everyone, all the time” model of the New Testament. Our tendency toward ecclesiastical consumerism has seriously weakened the church. For most of us, church is merely an event we attend or an organization we belong to. We do not see it as a calling that shapes our entire life.

But consider this: we could never hire enough paid staff to meet the ministry needs of the average local church. The “passive body that pays the professionals” culture of the modern evangelical church must be forsaken for the ministry model God has so wisely ordained.<sup>2</sup>

This letter comes to you as a unified voice from the pastor and deacons. After a lengthy corporate discussion, many private discussions, some fruitful prayer meetings and an extremely helpful Deacon meeting related to the structure of our body life together, the pastor and deacons present the following with full assurance and unanimous agreement that it is best for our church right now.

Our goal with the initiation of Growth Groups is continually being refined as we grow in our understanding of both God’s design for the “body life”<sup>3</sup> of his church and the dynamic of interpersonal relationships. If we are going to change the very culture of the church as Tripp suggests with his book, then we have to realize that the change will take years, if not generations. Therefore, the state of flux that new ministries, like Growth Groups, go through is not a sign of their failure or weakness as much as a sign of their need for refining. We believe that over the past few months, we have been able to refine our purposes and procedures for our Growth Group ministry.

### The Purpose

We would like to state very clearly the two-fold purpose of our Growth Group Initiative. The first goal we pray and work toward is that every attendee of LBC would have a *placement and opportunity to serve the various needs of others*. We would either have to develop enough ministries and programs with its trained and paid professionals so as to suit the individual gifts and talents of every person or we would need to develop one ministry that envelopes all the gifts and talents of every person. It seems that the way of Christian living described in the body life dynamic within the New Testament church favors a more private and informal ministry that meets in houses of

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<sup>1</sup> This is the title of book written by Paul Tripp published by P&R, 2002.

<sup>2</sup> Tripp, *Instruments*. Pp. xi-xii.

<sup>3</sup> The term “body life” is an expression for the way the church body lives together corporately.

believers more than a public and formal ministry that is centralized in a church building. When one considers the vast commands aimed at “one another,” it seems clear that the main function of the body life dynamic within the church should be aimed at interpersonal relationships that seek to serve others. Therefore, ***our first goal in this initiative is to provide an avenue whereby we as a church can easily and readily serve others.*** It is our prayer that every participant in the Growth Group initiative will enter into this ministry with eyes wide open and hearts ready to be poured out in service to others. It ought to be the heart-beat of each participant on any given Sunday, “How can I serve my group today?”

The second goal that we will pray toward is that the Growth Groups will provide us as a church ***a process whereby we might advance, assess and acknowledge our future leaders, teachers, and even elders and pastors.*** It is our desire to use the Growth Group initiative as a means to refining our gifts and abilities to the point where those men gifted by God may be clearly recognized as gifts to the body (Ephesians 4:11). It is our prayer, then, that Growth Groups become the fertile soil for growing godly leadership within our church. It ought to be the heart-beat of each participant on any given Sunday, “How can I use my gifts and talents for the good of others and the glory of God?”

## **The Procedure**

Next, we would like to describe for you the procedure for our body life together as it stands.

It has become clear that the way in which our last groups were formed was not the best possible way. Because we did not like the way the last groups were formed, we proposed starting over from scratch. However, after speaking with many of the leaders and given our review of the present groups meeting, we have found that a majority of them are working well and accomplishing our desires. Therefore, we are going to continue with the groups as they exist, with a couple of exceptions. We know that one of the groups has disbanded and been absorbed by other groups. There are a few other private conversations that need to be had as well. But for the most part, we have come to see that as the leadership we cannot try to own or control these groups. We cannot force or legislate participation. We can simply preach and promote the necessity of them. In the end, it is up to each of you to participate. Therefore, if groups disband or people drop off, there is nothing we can do. This is an entirely voluntary ministry. The people who participate must want to participate in order for it to work (as is the case with any aspect of body life!). Thus, we as a unified board thought we would be doing detriment to completely re-structure the groups that are already working. We do not want to do anything that remotely resembles our attempt at bending the will of the people. We see the Growth Group initiative as a wise move in accomplishing the two-fold objective stated above and we will move forward prayerfully with it.

Second, after much deliberation and debate, we are in unified agreement that the original proposal of offering a Sunday night service once a month would not sufficiently accomplish the desired goal for corporate unity. All agree that a “family dynamic” within the church is necessary and crucial. However, one Sunday night service a month meeting at 6 p.m. does not appear to be the most pragmatic way for accomplishing this goal. Therefore, we will work hard at keeping our monthly Koinonia Konnections a top-priority for promoting corporate fellowship and intimacy. We will include such things as afternoon prayer and singspirations to the fellowships. Furthermore, Pastor will reserve the right any time a need arises to call a special gathering of the church on a Sunday evening for prayer, family-talk, member’s meetings, discipline issues, etc. Our Quarterly Business meetings and Mission’s Prayer nights will meet as usual. Lastly, Pastor has the freedom to call all Growth Groups back to a corporate meeting on Sunday evenings for a short season of systematic teaching led by him. For example, if pastor has a fresh and exciting series to teach, he will call the groups back for a period of successive weeks in order to teach through an important series. But over-all, the Growth Groups meeting three out of four weeks will be our normal protocol.

Pastor will begin meeting regularly with all Growth Group leaders for a time of in-depth discussion and prayer related to the initiative. He will offer any training and equipping necessary for their advancement as facilitators, teachers and leaders. Growth Group leaders will be given liberty to meet when and where they so desire, to gather and disband according to their discernment. Leaders may offer Bible studies of their choosing provided they are in agreement with the LBC’s *Confession of Faith*. Any question concerning material, or any suggestions may be brought to the attention of Pastor or the Deacon of Discipleship.

We truly want to change the culture of the church. We want to take it out of the hands of the paid professionals and bring it into the hands of God’s people. This is the biblical model. Please pray with us and work with us toward this end. It may not be finally realized until our children are leading the church.