

## 3 Reasons Groups MUST Be a Big Deal

While one person can make a significant impact on each of us, we tend to be much more influenced by groups of people. Here is a fascinating example: The Petrified Forest National Park in Arizona has often faced a crisis as people can steal petrified wood at an alarming rate. Some researchers tested what message would motivate people to respect the forest and not steal wood. Three different tests were conducted:

- Test 1: No sign posted.
- Test 2: A posted sign with a picture of *one person* picking up petrified wood with encouragement not to take wood.
- Test 3: A posted sign with a picture of *three people* picking up petrified wood with encouragement not to take wood.

*So what were the results?*

When there was no sign posted, people stole 2.9% of the wood. When there was a sign showing only one person taking the wood, 1.9% of the wood was taken. When there was a sign showing several people taking wood, 7.9% of the wood was taken. Clearly people were much more willing to follow the lead of a crowd than a single person. \* A group can impact people much more than one person can.

**The people in your church will be much more influenced by a group of people than they will be by one person, by even one pastor.** While a pastor can make a significant impact on a person's life, the impact of a group is much more sustainable and reproducible.

Here are three reasons groups must be a big deal at your church this fall. (I am using the term groups, but the same applies to Sunday School classes, Bible fellowships, etc.)

### **1. A group provides encouragement that no one person will ever be able to provide.**

We are all limited in the number of relationships we can have. Thus, a church that does not value groups acts as if they foolishly believe that a pastor/leader can deeply relate to a lot of people. Without groups, ministry leaders can run feverishly in futile attempts to relate deeply to lots of people.

### **2. A group illustrates the faith in multiple ways.**

One person can provide an incredible example of faith and godliness, but it is *one* example. A group of people provides multiple expressions and illustrations of how the Christian faith is expressed in different spheres of life.

### **3. A group of believers provides a counter culture.**

People in your church are going to be impacted by some group of people. The wisdom writer wrote, "The one who walks with the wise will become wise, but a companion of fools will suffer harm" (Proverbs 13:20). The groups of people we surround ourselves with either help or harm us. By offering and emphasizing groups, churches offer an opportunity to walk with the wise. If people don't walk with the wise, they will be a companion of fools and suffer harm.

Here is my observation: A church that does not emphasize groups tends to put way too much burden on a weekend worship service and too little trust in the power of Christian community.

\* *The research is cited in the book "Social Psychology and Evaluation," page 277.*

> [Read more from Eric.](#)

---

[Learn more about the importance of groups in the big picture of Discipleship at your church.](#)