

## **Rick Warren: Four Reasons for Small Groups** **Edited, expanded, and posted by Bob Young**

A church can attract attenders through preaching, but disciples are made in small groups. A church that is serious about helping members toward a deep relationship with Jesus will know why small groups are so important to spiritual growth and why they are more than simply another Bible study to attend. Small groups provide the accountability and support we need to mature as believers.

I (Bob Young) sat down to make a short list of the characteristics of small groups – a few things that make small groups effective in the growth and development of the local church. Within a minute, I listed ten things.

- Small groups are relational, personal
- Small groups are more likely to be accountable
- Small groups encourage transparency
- Small groups are supportive
- Small groups are responsive, especially with regard to location, needs, and time changes
- Small groups are more likely to be open
- Small groups are inviting, there is room for more and there is a desire for more
- Small groups encourage sharing
- Small groups are expandable
- Small groups are less expensive, are more economical, and are practical

Small groups are important for all of the reasons I have listed.

Consider four specific points from an article by Rick Warren—four primary reasons why small groups are important to your church.

### **1. Small groups are relational.**

You cannot have a conversation with a large group; you have conversations with a few people. When there are more than ten people present, most people stop talking. It is almost impossible to know how to love your neighbor unless you are involved in a small group. You do not need a lot of friends in life, but you do need a few close ones. You find the solid, supportive friendships you need in small groups.

Some people say they do not want the church to grow larger because they won't know everybody in the congregation. Small groups allow you to know people, regardless of how big the church is. You don't have to know everyone in the church as long as you know somebody in the church. If you miss a weekend service, not everyone will know you weren't there, but your small group will know. Even large congregations seem small when the members are in small groups.

### **2. Small groups are flexible.**

Small groups can meet anywhere – a library, coffee shop, park, an office during lunch, or in a home. The Bible says that God is among two or three who are together in his name.

### **3. Small groups are expandable.**

You will run out of space and money if you try to build enough classrooms for every member to meet at church. But if your small groups are meeting across the community, you will never run out of space. Saddleback has small groups spread over 100 square miles. Do not limit the number of small groups you can have – that is like letting the shoe tell the foot how big it can get. Buildings are a tool for ministry, but what matters is how we invest in people.

### **4. Small groups are economical.**

When people meet at the church building, we pay for lights, heating and cooling, and janitors. When a family hosts a small group, they pay for utilities and they clean up. Most are glad to take care of such things as part of their ministry.

Warren closes with this. *“One last thing. You bring a guy to the church for a meeting and he probably sits there like a bump on a log. You put him in a home and give him a cup of coffee, and he may talk his head off. Why? Because you've put him in an environment that encourages fellowship.”*