

A Balanced Purpose GroupWords

I have mentioned before the three-faceted approach that I like to bring to ministry. I call them the Three Faces of Faith or the Shape of Faith: **UpReach**, **InReach**, and **OutReach**.

In a Small Group we could call these three essentials: **Bible Study**, **Group Building**, and **Multiplication**. A healthy small group needs all three to remain balanced.

Focusing only on **Bible Study** can lead to scholasticism, where the end goal is knowledge rather than a growing, changing life. Focusing only on **Group Building** can lead to social selfishness, even group narcissism, where group members have an inflated self-love of his or her group. Focusing only on **Mission** can lead to burnout as the group operates without fuel provided by God (UpReach) and his people (InReach).

A healthy exercise for your group is to take the time to evaluate your group goals. Discuss **UpReach**, **InReach**, and **OutReach** using the following strategy:

UPREACH / BIBLE STUDY ...

OUR GOAL IS TO SHARE OUR SPIRITUAL STORY THROUGH SCRIPTURE.

The Small Group Bible Study is designed to help us tell our spiritual story to the group by responding to God's Word in personal terms. By studying the Word together, we have the opportunity to tell the story of our spiritual beginnings, our progress, our struggles, hopes and fears.

INREACH / GROUP BUILDING ...

OUR GOAL IS TO BECOME A CARING COMMUNITY.

Because our groups meet every week and because they are small, group building is probably the most natural goal to focus on. We easily notice who is absent. We come to know the details of everyone's family and work. But still, only God (UpReach) can turn this "social" gathering into a "spiritual" family.

OUTREACH / MISSION

OUR GOAL IS TO GROW NUMERICALLY AND SPIRITUALLY.

When people place their membership at our church, come to us through baptism, or visit our services as non-Christians, the sheer size of our worship and our classes can hide the personal side of our church. But when we bring them into our small group the Christian can find their family and the non-Christian can find a powerful message from God. Our groups have the greatest mission of all — to bring new people into a relationship with Jesus and into fellowship with his family.

Because of a Cross,
Bob