

Community Groups are the primary vehicle for discipleship at The Gathering. It is through the interaction that takes place in each of these groups around our area that will enable people to begin to move from being drawn to God to a life that is being deepened by God. Use it as a resource to lead your group in discovering, owning, and applying the truths of God's Word. There may be aspects you do not want to use and there may be instances where you just want to focus on a particular point or truth. Some questions may bring out emotions and cause people to dwell on an aspect of their relationship with God. Use this as a flexible teaching tool not a rigid group task list.

Consider...

Use the summary and discussion to review and apply this week's message:

Message Summary

Sunday, Pastor Paul walked us through what happened in the early church when they experienced their first "horizontal" problem. Instead of trying to solve it by being better at the horizontal stuff, these early church leaders were smart enough to realize that horizontal problems can't be solved without the right vertical priorities. There were 3 important steps in the process of dealing with a potential mess:

1. **The problem.** We tend to act surprised that people have problems with other people, but as Pastor Paul pointed out from Acts 6:1, **problems show up when the numbers go up.** The more people there are, the more likely we'll bump into each other and cause friction. That's what happened to the early church.
2. **The plan.** Instead of dropping the spiritual disciplines to focus on the physical problems, these leaders had the wisdom to exalt even more the vertical priorities of prayer and studying the word. In short, they didn't stop seeking God in order to start pleasing man, and they were able to trust that the disciples knew each other well enough to select godly, qualified men to help.
3. **The payoff.** Acts 6:7 says that not only did the word spread and the church grow, but also that a large number of priests – religious leaders – came to obedience in their faith. In other words, the fact that the church handled horizontal people problems by maintaining a focus on godly vertical priorities was enough to get the attention of the religious and point them to Jesus.

Discuss

Use the following questions to review and apply the points learned in the message.

- What was one helpful, eye-opening, or troubling insight or principle from this week's message?
- Take some time in your group to discuss some of the more challenging things we face in our horizontal relationships. Why do you think it's so easy for us to "rub each other the wrong way?"
- How does Proverbs 27:17 show that God actually uses these challenges?
- Have you ever felt overlooked? How did you handle it (or did you handle it)? How did others help or not help you bring God's grace into the situation?
- Do you think that prayer is practical? Why or why not? How do we practically live out the command found in 1 Thessalonians 5:17?
- One of the best ways we can keep from being so vertical (in prayer and other spiritual disciplines) that we become useless in the horizontal (day-to-day relationships with others) is by praying FOR each other. Philippians 1:3-5 reveals that Paul prayed for believers with thankfulness and joy! This week, try thanking God for the believers he's partnered you with for the gospel and see how it affects the horizontal issues you may be facing with them.
- End your time together by praying for the ones who are facing a tough horizontal issue. Ask God to give them His perspective and His wisdom on the situation (James 1:5 says he'll give a lot!!).