

Quotes & Notes from [Missional Small Groups](#) (by M. Scott Boren)

From Pg. 38:

Four Types of Groups:

“Group #1: The Story of Personal Improvement – [Story 1 Given] This kind of group provides an opportunity for people to improve the normal rhythms of their normal lives... Little or even nothing about the rhythms of Pat’s life changes except the fact that he attends a small group when it is convenient. In this story, the focus lies on whether the group is beneficial to Pat’s life. Pat attends if he likes the people, if the group leader is competent, and if the material is about a topic in which Pat is interested.

Group #2: The Story of Lifestyle Adjustment – [Story 2 Given] When Pat enters this story, it requires some adjustment to the Life Rhythms Diagram. Group life is not just added on top of all the other stuff Pat does. Room has been made in his weekly schedule for this group of people because the meeting is a priority and the group members have become friends. There is usually a range of adjustment here. Some might simply choose to not work overtime so they can get to the group meeting on time, while others plan a social outing or host the meeting. Usually the biggest change in this Lifestyle Adjustment story is a change in social priorities.

While the Improvement story is about convenience, the Adjustment story is usually about commitment to formal gatherings. The group members have committed to ... focus on attending weekly meetings and other scheduled group events.”

If I can go out on a limb, I would say the Young Adults Group we had last year was somewhere between groups 1 & 2 above. Some people came only when it was convenient (Group 1) while others sacrificed to be consistent (Group 2). I think having various members take turns hosting the event promoted an overall feeling of ownership, which was beneficial.

As a further observation I would suggest the “Sunday Morning Church Experience” can become – in some cases – merely an extension of the Group 2 mentality described above: a commitment to formal gatherings. Not bad of course, for a start, but there is more to be had.

“In my [the author’s] experience, most small groups in North American churches are living the Adjustment story. For the most part, the people in those groups are living lives that are an adjustment from the predominant life of the wider culture.

In other words, the group experience is simply laid on top of the typical American way of life. Church leaders know how to establish group systems, small group leaders know how to lead good group meetings, and group members know how to participate in group discussions. (Pretty good analysis, I’d say)

Group #3. The Story of Relational Revision. When a group of people play the rhythms of this story, the song has a distinctive sound:

Our group has a weekly meeting, but I am not sure that you would call it a meeting in a formal sense of the word. When we get together, it is the culmination of the rest of the week when we have been in one another's lives. It is a time of sharing what God has been doing, praying for each other, and talking about how God is using us in our normal lives. Yes, we do have a weekly lesson, but the leader usually only asks one or two questions from it.

The most important part of our group, however, is not the meeting; it is how we are connected the other six days. I have never been part of a group in which people are so willing to sacrifice time and energy for each other. And this connectedness actually spills out into our neighborhood. It seems like we are always interacting with, praying for, and serving people who live near us. And in some ways, they are just as much part of our group as those of us who call ourselves Christians.

I am not sure how I was able to do life before having this group. This might sound a bit utopian, but it is far from it. Sometimes it is hard. Recently we have had to wrestle with some relational conflict and hurt feelings. In the past I would have run away from such encounters, but not this time. It was not easy, but we pressed through. We are still learning what it means to be God's family.

The basic element to this story is that a group of people are intentionally learning to do life together differently ... When Pat begins to live out this story, much more happens than a simple rearrangement of circles. Actually, the way the diagram is constructed begins to change. Instead of Pat as an individual being at the center, Pat becomes part of a community and begins to do life out of a different center – a set of relationships with five to twelve people. But even more importantly, the focus of these people revolves around the presence of Jesus in their midst, moving in and through them as a group. The group has chosen to do community with one another by making the presence of Christ central.

Group #4: The story of Missional Re-Creation. The rhythms of this story stand in stark contrast to the predominant story of our culture. It might sound something like this:

We have developed a way of connecting with each other and God that has resulted in some rather unpredictable developments. Two couples and a single person in our group live within walking distance of each other. So as a group we decided to adopt their neighborhood. We started with a block party. At first it was hard because no one knew us, but after the first party, we started becoming a presence in the community. Then one person started a summer children's Bible study, and as she got to know the neighbors and their needs, we began to pray. Now we have come around a single mom who has three kids, and we include her as much as we can in the life of the group. She has yet to fully understand who Jesus is, but we feel led to embrace her and the kids and see what God does in her life.

Some see the potential to reach people in the community through groups in this story and want a list of things to do so they can join in. But it does not work that way. In the Relational Revision story, a group develops rhythms over time that allow for this kind of dynamic creativity. The hard part of talking about [this 4th story] is the fact that when groups play these rhythms, the actual manifestations of them are always different. There is no singular form or function for what a group might look like here. Some groups might look just like most other small groups except that they are being used in very creative ways to engage their neighborhood. Others might establish a house church that looks nothing like typical small groups.”