

# May Small Groups News Letter

## Paradigm Shifts on the Hilltop

This year we have been talking about several ways that our small groups can mature and grow together. We have added several elements to our Small Group Ministry to provide support and good guidelines for every small group. We pray for each group every week. Our hope is that EVERY group, both new groups and existing groups, will take the time to make some good *paradigm shifts* this year. We know that this is not an easy task for groups that have been going for many years. And, it is a bit easier to begin a group with new ideas. However, please consider what is best for your group and let's have some constructive conversations about how to have healthy, alive, growing groups. Here are the paradigm shifts that we have prayed about and now we are talking about with every small group leader:

- (1) **Small Group Coaches** We have a great group of Hilltoppers who are willing to walk with small group leaders. Not only will they provide personal and prayer support, but also good discussions on new small group training materials, so that everyone keeps up with good resources and shepherding ministry. We want to help each leader to have a great supportive mentoring relationship. For our small groups that have been going for a long time, this can be a great opportunity for revival and growth in your leadership and also for your group. Let's continue to talk about and implement coaching for each small group this year.
- (2) **No One Leads Alone** Every small group is encouraged to share leadership! Small group leaders are encouraged to know where each person in their group is spiritually, to know the spiritual temperature of each person. Then to help each person get to that next spiritual step. For the person who has been attending a while and has shown interest in prayer – ask that person to keep a notebook with prayer requests and write email reminders to everyone in the group – ask them to get creative. The person(s) who has the gift of leading worship, ask them to prepare worship for the group, or lead a season of worship for the group. The person who is gifted in hospitality and organization, encourage that person to organize parties and make a good structure for bringing refreshments for your group. For the ones who are gifted servants, walk with them as they organize service projects for the group. And, the ones who are gifted leaders and facilitators, invite them to help you lead the group.
- (3) **Set Group Goals** Each group has been challenged to grow in three ways this year: *Inward, Outward, & Upward*. Many groups are already reaching these goals. Please pray for God to give you wisdom and insight into how He would like for you to grow this year. Then, we are encouraging every group to choose one *inward, one outward and one upward goal* for your group to grow in this year. Please look over the examples of goals listed in this news letter then talk about them with your group. Decide on the three goals that would build up your group the most and move forward with them. If we set God sized goals, He will accomplish more than we could ever expect. If we don't intentionally grow and set Godly goals then, more than likely, we will grow very little.
- (4) **Assess our Strengths and Weaknesses** We are beginning to evaluate our small groups more effectively. At the end of every book or DVD series used in your small group, please ask Kerrie Clark [Kerrie@hilltopchurchofchrist.com](mailto:Kerrie@hilltopchurchofchrist.com) for evaluation forms, and give them out in your group. Group members will give valuable information for growth and improvement in your groups. During the months of November and December we will give out Small Group Evaluations to everyone at Hilltop. In this evaluation we will ask questions about the three goals – Inward, Outward & Upward goals, about how well the group is living by Hilltop's vision, mission & core values, about service projects that the small group did together, and any assessment on resources used and leaders that were in the group. After we gather this information, we will report the outcomes and move forward with improvement and goals for growth for the next year.

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# *A Vision for Health*

## *Taking the Spiritual Temperature*

Everyone in a small group is in a unique relationship with the Lord, with the group, and with our church. We are each in a different place spiritually. We can not treat everyone in our groups the same and expect each person to have the same responses as everyone else. Just like in a family, the older members usher the newer members into adulthood. Even twins approach growth and maturity differently and in their own ways.

Our small groups are the very best place for people to grow in spiritual maturity because they are small enough for everyone to know each other deeply. Through these honest and open Godly relationships we can help each other become all that God intended for us to be. We are like that family that cares for each other. We see giftedness and our strengths and weaknesses. Through these relationships God helps us to encourage each other to try out and develop our spiritual gifts.

We encourage groups that are highly social to party with all your might and also to have a good balance of deep Godly growth and knowing everyone in your group. Both are very important to our Spiritual health! It is not easy to befriend people who are different than us or to forgive those who make mistakes. However, just as a family learns to live together and stay together by working things out and loving no matter what, small groups mature spiritually by doing the same.

So, how do we take the spiritual temperature of everyone in the group? Small group leaders and the more mature members of the group are encouraged to spend time outside the group with every member. Learn about each other, confess to each other, pray for each other. Through going to coffee or dinner together we learn so much about each other. Ask questions about gifts and talents. Find out about interests and what is important to that person. Learn of any special needs or hurts in their lives.

After getting to know everyone, pray for each person. Pray that the Lord will help every person develop their gifts. Then fan into flame the gifts God has given. (2 Timothy 1:6-7). Begin inviting people to take the next Spiritual step for personal growth. If a person has been attending for a while, but does not participate, invite them to share with the group. For the person who shares, but has not taken any responsibility, ask them to begin helping the group in some way. When a person has helped for a while talk to them more seriously about their gifts and what they can do in leadership for the group and for the church on Sunday. When a person has led in the group for a while talk with them about how they can train others to lead and also try out other leadership opportunities.

We are talking about growing and developing through small group relationships. This is one of the major ways that the Lord matures Hilltoppers. People become all that they can be through encouragement and love in our small groups.

***For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.***

***2 Timothy 1: 6-7***

# Let's Discuss Group Goals

## Next Steps to Growing Effective Groups

Stephen Covey, author of the 7 habits of Highly Effective People, tells people to "live life with the end in view." Last month's newsletter article, "*Beginning with the End in Mind*", encouraged groups to set some goals and map out a good plan for the group. The Small Group ministry is challenging each of our small groups to **set one of each of these three goals this year**, one **Inward Goal**, **Outward Goal** and **Upward Goal**.

Presently, we have small groups meeting almost every day of the week, and not one of these groups is structured the same. There are different kinds of group settings; some meet in homes, some meet at the beach, some meet on the Hilltop. Of these groups there are different types of study materials being used, some study books of the bible or biblical topics, some use Christian books, and some use secular books, some watch Bible based DVDs. As you can see there is a wide variety of groups. A group adapts its structure to what is best for its members, not the reverse (Mark 2:27). The group should be designed for the good of the members.

Since most of our groups have been going for several years, asking every group to begin setting goals together and intentionally growing together every year, seems to be a very difficult task. We are asking for a *paradigm shift*. Intentionally talking about who we are as a group, how we would like to serve together and become a healthier, stronger group within a year, is a very healthy change. Every group, no matter how different than other groups, can choose their own personal goals and really grow in a year.

## Why Set Group Goals?

David Sharpe, Community Development Specialist for Montana State University says, "One measure of group effectiveness is how well a group accomplishes its goals. Initially, all groups were established to satisfy some common need of the members or to pursue a common cause. But as time passes, group members frequently lose sight of their goals."

Some contend that groups start by increasing in effectiveness until their first goals are accomplished and then decline in effectiveness unless new goals are set. Failure to periodically set new goals leads to stagnation or termination.

If you have any questions or comments please talk with us about this! Contact Monica or Kerrie at (310)322-5757 or [monica@hilltopchurchofchrist.co](mailto:monica@hilltopchurchofchrist.co)

### Inward Goals

*Growing in Relationships within the Hilltop Family*

1. Pray for Hilltop
2. Worship Night – get several groups together
3. Invite people at Hilltop to join your small group
4. Encourage and support Hilltop Family members with special needs
5. Know the spiritual temperature of everyone in your small group and help each other reach the next spiritual step
6. Organize fellowship events

### Outward Goals

*Growing in relationships outside the Hilltop Family*

1. Reaching out to our neighbors to become friends
2. Invite your friends to join a small group and visit Hilltop
3. Service projects for individuals and our community.
4. Encourage People in the Armed Forces.
5. World Bible School
6. Let's Start Talking mission trips
7. Alpha Course
8. Teaching and encouraging others as we sacrifice in giving

### Upward Goals

*Growing in Relationship with God*

1. Personal prayer time
2. Personal Bible study Plan small group curriculum with Coaches
3. Prayer walks
4. Reading through the Bible in a year
5. Focus on worship and praise in the entire small group for a short season
6. Appreciate God through nature individually and as a group
7. Read and pray through the Psalms

# Growth in the Kingdom

## How to set Group Goals

One of the best techniques for producing new ideas, insights and potential group goals is brainstorming. Set a time for your group to brainstorm. Ask the group to think of all the possible goals that will help the group grow 'Inwardly', all the possible goals that will help the group grow 'Outwardly' and 'Upwardly'. Encourage group members to think of as many ideas as possible. Once all ideas are recorded have the group examine the list and select the most appropriate goals. Be sure to distribute the goals to members as a reminder of what the group has agreed to.

Another way to set goals would be for each member of the group to do the Spiritual Health Assessment (see Article on p. 5). Based on the results, group goals could be set according to the giftedness of each of the members and also to meet the spiritual needs of its members.

We encourage you to set one goal for each of the following – one Inward Goal, one Outward Goal and one Upward goal with your group for this year. Don't attempt more goals than the group can realistically expect to achieve. And when determining potential group functions and tasks, consider to what degree the activities will help the group reach its goals. For example, the Spiritual Health Assessment uses *Crawl*, *Walk* and *Run* as steps to developing a plan to for spiritual effectiveness.

If we don't set any goals, then we won't have anything to strive for and we'll have no way of measuring our group's growth.

## Crawl/Walk/Run

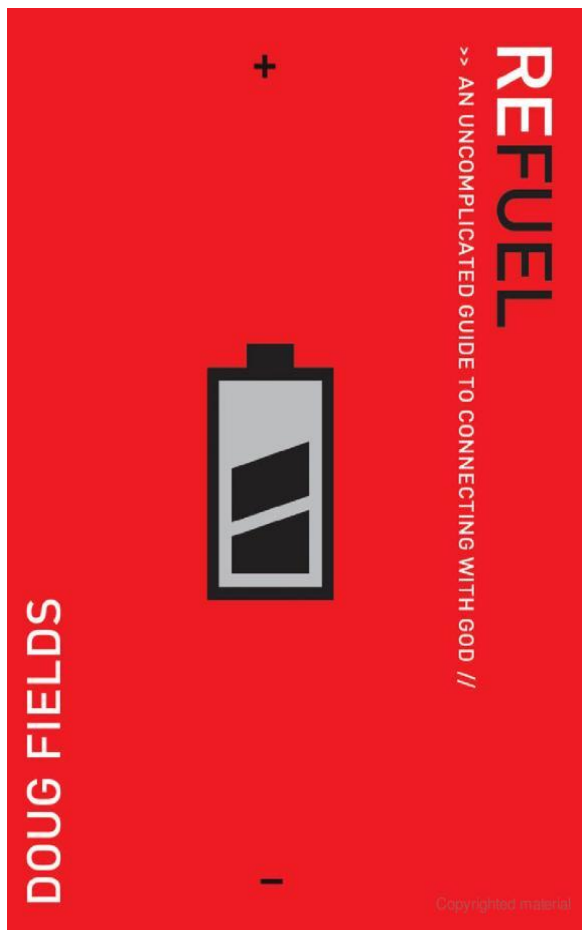
There are several different ways we can grow closer to our church body, our friends and families outside the church, and our Lord God this year. Consider three different levels of growth, (1) *Crawl* – doing a relatively easy step in the right Spiritual direction. (2) *Walk* – Doing something more substantial that makes a difference in my spiritual life, and (3) *Run* – Doing something with all my might to improve my Spiritual life. Each one of these steps effectively brings us closer to the Lord. We are encouraged to be honest with ourselves as we set one or two goals for this year. What can I consistently stick with?

The Spiritual Health Assessment gives us several crawl/walk /run options for Spiritual growth. They have been very helpful for us this year. Personally, some of the crawl suggestions have made a huge difference in my outlook on life. The Spiritual Health Assessment & Planner is available to you personally and for groups to use.

Here are some examples for you to consider:

Assessment	Crawl	Walk	Run
I regularly use my time to serve God	See your family and job as a ministry	Give one hour to serve at your church each week	Commit to serve in a ministry at church that may take more time.
I often think about ways to use my God given gifts.	Take a spiritual gifts survey to discover your gifts.	Meet with a minister to discover your spiritual gifts.	Start a new ministry in the church to serve others based on your gifts.
I am able to praise god during difficult times and see them as opportunities to grow	During a crisis thank God for all he has done for you and how he will help you grow.	Journal about your circumstances to see how god is working in and through them.	Minister to others through the pain you have experienced by joining ministries at church.
I have a deep desire to spend time in God's presence.	Give God a one minute prayer several times every day.	Set aside some time to go on a spiritual retreat to be alone with God.	Identify a place you can go to focus on God and worship Him. Make it a habit to spend time there.

# REFUEL *Hilltop*



**May 31- June 21**

Beginning with **Friendship Sunday, May 31** we will have a four week sermon series on how to live a Refueled life.

This series is based on the book, *Refuel* by Doug Fields. He published *Refuel* earlier this year to encourage and build up Christians today, in these difficult economic times. You will be surprised at the relevance and practical use for your life right here, right now.

Please prepare for a wonderful new series and invite your friends to come along for the refueling!

Small group materials are also available for those who would like to discuss *Refuel* in their groups. Contact Monica or Kerrie at (310)322-5757 or [monica@hilltopchurchofchrist.com](mailto:monica@hilltopchurchofchrist.com) or [Kerrie@hilltopchurchofchrist.com](mailto:Kerrie@hilltopchurchofchrist.com)

## Consider this...

If you've always struggled with the stereotypical quiet - time, don't give up hope!

You've been told that you're supposed to spend time with God. You've valiantly set your alarm clock an hour early or worked partway through some ambitious study guides, but sooner or later your busy life creeps back in and steals your resolve. Why do you consistently fail at your quiet times? Maybe it's because you've bought into somebody else's unrealistic, unsustainable idea of what time with God ought to look like.

Lose the guilt. Drop the unrealistic expectations. You can connect with God stay spiritually full. Doug Fields, pastor at Saddleback Church, offers a simple, uncomplicated plan that you can carry out. All you have to do is: **STOP, BE QUIET, MAKE A CONNECTION.**

Simple. But not simplistic. If you can practice these habits throughout your day, you will enjoy a new depth and fullness in your spiritual life.

# *Small Group Resources*

## *How Do I Measure My Spiritual Health And the Spiritual Health of a Small Group?*

In February of this year, the Hilltop staff had a one day retreat before the Small Groups Conference at Saddleback. After a nice lunch, we arrived at a beautiful location that overlooked the ocean. We sat down and Monica said, "Okay, first I thought we'd start with each of us doing the Spiritual Health Assessment." Well my heart bounced to my stomach a bit, and then she said, "And I thought then we could pair up and do one for each other". Now without a doubt, my heart hit my stomach like a rock! Why did this make me so nervous? Why did I not want to do it? If I'm honest, I guess I was afraid of what I was going to find out about myself. Why? I guess it's because on one level I already knew there were things I could improve on, or wasn't doing at all to grow spiritually.

Well, I said a prayer and did the assessment and to my surprise it was very enlightening. And Monica's assessment of my spiritual health was pretty close to the one I had done for myself. The whole process was surprisingly motivating and has helped me so much in having a plan for growing spiritually.

There is no sure-fire way to evaluate and quantify our spiritual health in numerical terms. We can't take a test to see if we are getting an A or D in our relationship with God. But we can at least get a rough idea about our spiritual health by taking an objective look at our actions and beliefs.

The Spiritual Assessment is not a test, but rather a tool that helped me evaluate my spiritual health and the Spiritual Health Planner gave me direction for developing a plan to bring me close to what God wants for my life.

In addition, as a group, we were able to learn about each others gifts, strengths and weaknesses. We laughed and sighed as we learned about each other. We truly grew closer from doing the assessment together. We could understand more clearly why God put us all together and how God could use us more effectively in the future.

We have available to you the *Spiritual Health Assessment* and *Spiritual Health Planner* for you to use individually and/or in your small group. We can email the Spiritual Health Assessment to you or print it off for you and your group. Please give us a call if you have any questions or would like to use this wonderful tool. Call me or write to me at:

[Kerrie@hilltopchurchofchrist.com](mailto:Kerrie@hilltopchurchofchrist.com) or (310)322-5757.

***Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others. Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus.***

***2 Timothy 2:1-3***

# Hilltop May Calendar

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2 Small Group 10am
3 Evening Worship 5pm	4	5 Alpha Course 6:30pm	6 Parenting Group 6pm  LST Training 6pm	7 Ladies Study 9am Prayer Group 12pm Full Throttle	8	9 Small Group 10am
10 Evening Worship 5pm	11	12 Alpha Course 6:30pm	13 Parenting Group 6pm  LST Training 6pm	14 Ladies Study 9am Prayer Group 12pm Full Throttle	15	16 Small Group 10am
17 Evening Worship 5pm	18	19 Alpha Course 6:30pm	20 Parenting Group 6pm  LST Training 6pm	21 Ladies Study 9am Prayer Group 12pm Full Throttle	22	23 Small Group 10am
24 Evening Worship 5pm	25	26 Alpha Course 6:30pm	27 Parenting Group 6pm  LST Training 6pm	28 Ladies Study 9am Prayer Group 12pm Full Throttle	29	30 Small Group 10am
31 Evening Worship 5pm						

# Small Group List

Day & Time	Name	Telephone & Address
Sun - 5:00pm	Smith, Fred & Linda	(310) 641-8495 8312 Creighton Ave., Los Angeles, 90045
Sun - 5:30pm	Burke, Allyn & Kathleen	(310) 216-9187 7803 Naylor, Los Angeles, CA 90045
Sun - 5:00pm	<b>Hilltop</b> , Hudsons & Edwards	(310) 322-4898 (Hudsons) 717 E Grand Ave, El Segundo, CA 90245
Mon - 8:00am	Fresh Brewed Girls	(310) 322-3271 844 Virginia St., El Segundo, CA 90245
Mon - 7:00pm	Campbell, Morrow, Mitchell	(626) 378-8737 (Rob Campbell) 2020 Delaware Ave., #7, Santa Monica, CA 90404
Tues - 9:30am	Albright, Carol	Various locations
Tues - 6:30pm	<b>Hilltop</b> , Alpha Reed, Jon	(310)529-2505 (Jon Reed) 717 E Grand Ave, El Segundo, CA 90245
Tues - 6:30pm	<b>Hilltop</b> , Alpha Knox, Rod & Alisa	(310)768-3308 (Knox) 717 E Grand Ave, El Segundo, CA 90245
Tues - 6:30pm	<b>Hilltop</b> , Alpha Clark, David & Kerrie	(310)640-6073 (Clark) 717 E Grand Ave, El Segundo, CA 90245
Tues - 8:30pm	Men - Dimick, Jeff	(310) 227-3822 8300 Gonzaga, Los Angeles, CA 90045
Wed - 6:00pm	<b>Hilltop</b> , Parenting Group Charla Griffy Brown	(310)420-2524 (Charla Griffy-Brown) 717 E Grand Ave, El Segundo, CA 90245
Wed - 7:00pm	Young Adults Grinley, Bob & Diane,	(310) 837-9472 10812 Wagner St., Culver City, CA 90230
Wed - 7:00pm	Albrights & Hostenstein	(310) 546-5479 (Albright) 922 10th St, Manhattan Beach, CA 90266
Wed. - 7:00pm	Buttles, Steve and Linda	(310) 306-5282 12620 Rosy Circle, Los Angeles, CA 90066
Wed - 7:30pm	Young Couples Mitchell, Nick & Nataliya	(310) 864-6818 9797 National Blvd., #23, LA, CA 90034
Thurs - 9:00am	<b>Hilltop</b> , Ladies - Machen & Moreland	(310)322-5757 717 E Grand Ave, El Segundo, CA 90245
Thurs - 11:00am	Shields, Millie (Women)	(310) 643-5775 5360 W. 124th Place, Hawthorne, CA 90250
Thurs - 12:00pm	<b>Hilltop</b> , Lunch Time Prayer Group	(310)322-5757 717 E Grand Ave, El Segundo, CA 90245
Thurs - 7:00pm	Edwards, Randy & Kathleen	(310) 322-2336 434 Maryland Street, El Segundo, CA 90245
Thurs - 7:00pm	Ng, John & Vivian	(310)541-6717 28524 Cedarbluff Dr Rancho Palos Verdes, CA 90275
Thurs - 7:00pm	Full Throttle, Youth Group (2 groups)	(310)322-5757 717 E Grand Ave, El Segundo, CA 90245

Sat - 9:30am	<b>Hilltop</b> , Sharon Riley	(424) 456-4644 717 East Grand Ave, El Segundo, CA 90245
Various Meetings	Lamberts & Machens	(310) 765-3314 (Lambert) 374 Richmond Street, El Segundo, CA 90245
Sun-TBD	Calhoun, Frances	(310) 259-7178 (Judith and Lynda) 14037 Chadron Ave #9, Hawthorne, CA 90250
Wed-TBD	<b>Hilltop</b>	(310)322-5757 717 E Grand Ave, El Segundo, CA 90245
TBD	Collins, Debbie - Women's	Long Beach
TBD	Various people	Long Beach Group
TBD	Hopkins, Ben & Sienna	(310) 717-9493 2622 W. 145th Street, Gardena, CA 90249
TBD	Devlin Ladies Group	(310) 902-2117 730 West Sycamore Ave, El Segundo, CA 90245