

THE FOUR CORNERED ROOM - A Simple Discipleship System, Part 1 - DM101 Module 2

F = Fellowship Corner Readings.

Newborn Developmental Level

Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love;

the fellowship of kindred minds is like to that above.

Before our Father's throne we pour our ardent prayers;

our fears, our hopes, our aims are one, our comforts and our cares.

We share each other's woes, our mutual burdens bear;

and often for each other flows the sympathizing tear.

When we asunder part, it gives us inward pain;

but we shall still be joined in heart, and hope to meet again.

STAGE 1: COME AND SEE:

(Develop relationships between one another.)

John 1:35 The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples; **36 and he looked at Jesus as he walked, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!"** 37 The two disciples heard him say this, **and they followed Jesus.** 38 Jesus turned, and saw them following, and said to them, "What do you seek?" **And they said to him, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "where are you staying?"** 39 **He said to them, "Come and see."** They came and saw where he was staying; and they stayed with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour. **40 One of the two who heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.** 41 He first found his brother Simon, and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which means Christ). **42 He brought him to Jesus.**

Reading #1. In the early 1960s sociologists Rodney Stark and John Lofland studied the first conversions to the Unification Church or "Moonie" cult in the United States as a means of identifying why people convert, with the following scientific conclusions:

Quote: Proselytizing bore fruit only ***when it followed or coincided with the formation of strong social attachments, typically family ties or close personal friendships.*** Successful conversion was not so much about ***selling beliefs as it was about building ties,*** thereby lowering the social costs and raising the social benefits associated with changing one's religious orientation. ***The converse was also true. Recruitment failure was all but assured if a person maintained strong attachments to a network of non-members.*** Many people spent time with the Moonies and expressed considerable interest in their doctrines but never joined. ***In nearly every case, these people had strong on-going attachments to non-members who disapproved of the group.*** By contrast, those who joined were often newcomers to San Francisco and thus separated from their family and friends. ***In short, social attachments lie at the heart of conversion, and conversion tends to proceed along social networks.*** This discovery has been replicated ***in scores of subsequent studies all over the world.***¹

Reflection Question: do you agree? What are the positive and negative implications of this?

¹Laurence R. Iannaccone, *The Market for Martyrs*, <http://www.religionomics.com/erel/S2-Archives/Iannaccone%20-%20Market%20for%20Martyrs.pdf> (accessed June 15, 2007).

Reading #2. Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*
Social bonds are by far the most powerful predictor of life satisfaction.

More Americans are bowling than ever before, but they are not bowling in leagues.

Joining and participating in one group cuts in half your odds of dying next year.

It has the equivalent benefit to your health of quitting smoking.

Every ten minutes of commuting reduces all forms of social capital by 10%

Watching commercial entertainment TV is the only leisure activity where doing more of it is associated with lower social capital.

Declining Social Capital: Trends over the last 25 years

Attending Club Meetings: 58% drop

Family dinners: 43% drop

Having friends over: 35% drop

Sociologist Robert Putnam's research indicates that American networks of engagement are breaking down and that this loss of "social capital" is the primary cause of many serious social problems. ***As the church is the primary builder of social networks, the decrease in social capital is both a cause and a result of the decline of church participation in America.***²

Relationships that build community bonds between neighbors are essential to disciple making.

Reflection Question: Do you agree? What are the implications of this?

Reading #3. Southern Baptist Sunday School expert Josh Hunt:

We used to have our friends over on Friday nights to play cards. We would have dessert, tell jokes, and play games together. One day I suggested to Sharon that we invite a couple who had visited the church to join us on Friday night. We did, and we had a good time in the process.

During the entire evening, we never said anything about church or Sunday school or the Bible or anything remotely religious. But, do you know what? They joined the church in a few weeks. Now, he is teaching a class himself. And they would both tell you that they were not living the disciple's life before they played cards and ate dessert with us that night

. . . That is why I say, if you want to double your class every two years or less, give Friday nights to Jesus. ***Have your friends over. Play cards. Eat dessert. Tell jokes. Laugh. Have a good time. But most of all, include an outsider couple.*** Ministry has never been so much fun. . . . ***This ministry is based on sound church growth thinking: people are not interested in a friendly church; they are looking for friends.***³

Josh Hunt found that 90% of the people he played cards with later joined the church.

The key issue for this corner is the formation of healthy relationships where people learn to ***love one another because they ***link up with someone*** as a ***partner/mentor*** who will love them the way Jesus did - John 13:34-35 - ***people need to belong before they believe***. Without enough nurture, ***there is a spiritual failure to thrive and growth stops***, leaving people stuck at this stage.

Reflection Question: Do you agree? Who was or is your church partner?

²Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, 65-79, 391-392, 408-410. See also www.bowlingalone.com.

³Josh Hunt, *How to Get 90% of Your Visitors to Join Your Church*, <http://www.joshhunt.com/friday.html> (accessed 16 June 2006).

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I = Interest Corner Readings

Child Developmental Level

WESLEY COVENANT PRAYER

I am no longer my own, *but thine.*

Put me to what thou wilt, *rank me with whom thou wilt.*

Put me to doing, *put me to suffering.*

Let me be employed for thee *or laid aside for thee,*
exalted for thee *or brought low for thee.*

Let me be full, *let me be empty.*

Let me have all things, *let me have nothing.*

I freely and heartily *yield all things to thy pleasure and disposal.*

And now, O glorious and blessed God, *Father, Son and Holy Spirit,*
thou art mine, *and I am thine. So be it.*

And the covenant which I have made on earth, *let it be ratified in heaven. Amen.*

STAGE 2: LEARN FROM ME

(What are you INTERESTED in?)

Reading #1. Mat 11:28 “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. **29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me;** for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. **30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”**

As safety, security and belonging needs are met, curiosity emerges. **Research shows that only 17% of church attenders participate in Sunday School, bible study or any learning event outside of worship.**⁴

Reflection Question: What does it mean to you to take the yoke of Jesus upon you?

Reading #2. What is the sure and certain sign that one is truly a disciple? John 8:31-32: Jesus then said to the Jews who had believed in him, **“If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples,** and you will know the truth, **and the truth will make you free.”**

Reflection Question: What does it mean to you to “continue in my word”? How do you do this?

Reading #3. What are we to teach disciples?

Mat 28:18 And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. **19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations,** baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you;** and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age."

Reflection Question: Who is teaching you to observe all that Jesus commanded?

***The key issue for this corner is that **new disciples continue to read the words of Jesus.** The goal is not to teach the Bible but that people read it, seek to understand it and apply it to their lives (Matthew 28:20). **In this corner people who belong learn what to believe and to obey.**

⁴George Barna, quoted in Greg Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples a Few at a Time*, 26.