



SERMON

SMALL GROUPS



“3 Strands” Part 2– The Stretcher Small Group

USING THIS SERMON DISCUSSION GUIDE

- This Sermon Discussion Guide is only a tool to aid you in meeting the needs of your group. For most groups, there are too many questions to answer in one session together. After considering the needs of your group, you may choose one of the following options:
 - ◆ one section of questions
 - ◆ one or two questions from each section
- Feel free to adapt the format to meet the needs of your group. If your group is mature and wants to dig deeper, add Scripture and ask suitable questions. Remember that this is only a guide.
- Personal application is key to everyone’s growth and should be included in every discussion. When asked how he or she intends to apply a certain principle a group member may say, “I need to spend more time in the Bible and in prayer.” It is important for you to help group members make applications that are more specific and commit to a specific plan of action by asking, for example, “How are you going to begin?” An example is to get up 30 minutes earlier each morning, spending 15 minutes reading the Bible and 10 minutes in prayer. Encourage each group member to be accountable to the group for personal progress at the next meeting.
- As the leader your goal is to help bring the group into a stimulating discussion that helps the members recognize their need for personal life change. Ultimately you want them to be willing to commit to change with accountability to the group. Accountability helps us to persevere in our commitments and achieve the blessings of success.



SERMON

SMALL GROUPS

Introduction

There will be, and probably have been seasons in your life when you needed to be carried. We all need a group of close friends, loving people to carry us, support us, and to get us to Jesus! We need friends who will have faith for us when we don't have faith for ourselves. The way that looks in a 3-stranded lifestyle, is sometimes you are the carrier and sometimes you are the carried, sometimes you are the rescuer and some days you are the rescued.

❖ **The 3-stranded life is the life that learns the importance of joining “The Stretcher Small Group.”**

[Ecclesiastes 4:9-12]

Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed. ¹⁰ If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But someone who falls alone is in real trouble. ¹¹ Likewise, two people lying close together can keep each other warm. But how can one be warm alone? ¹² A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer. Three are even better, for a cord of three strands is not easily broken.

“You’ll never live the best version of you without being in the right relationships”

[Ephesians 4:16]

He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is **healthy and growing and full of love.**



SERMON

SMALL GROUPS

- **Review:** The opposite of a 3-stranded life is an isolated life and a 3-stranded life is a life that is centered in Christ and then connected to others through Christ-centered- relationships

Key Scripture

[Mark 2:1-12]

When Jesus returned to Capernaum the news spread quickly that he was back home. ² Soon the house where he was staying was so packed with visitors that there was no more room, even outside the door. While He was teaching the Word they brought a paraplegic to him, carried by four men. When they weren't able to get in because of the crowd, they dug a hole in the roof and lowered the paraplegic on his stretcher. Impressed by their faith, Jesus said to the paraplegic, "**Son, I forgive your sins.**"

⁶⁻⁷Some religion scholars sitting there started whispering among themselves, "He can't talk that way! That's blasphemy! God and only God can forgive sins."

⁸⁻¹²Jesus knew right away what they were thinking, and said, "**Why are you so skeptical? Which is simpler: to say to the paraplegic, 'I forgive your sins,' or say, 'Get up, take your stretcher, and start walking'? Well, just so it's clear that I'm the Son of Man and authorized to do either, or both,** looking at the crippled man, he said "**Get up. Pick up your stretcher and go home.**" And the man did it—he jumped up, grabbed his stretcher, and walked out through the stunned onlookers. They were all amazed and praised God, exclaiming, "We've never seen anything like this before!"

1. We must recognize our limitations & admit we need help!



SERMON

SMALL GROUPS

What does the stretcher look like in our lives?

Maybe your stretcher is:

- **A physical condition** that is limiting or debilitating:
- **ANGER**: temper that you can't seem to control and it puts you in situations that are out of your control and hurting those around you
- **Fear & Intimidation**: you dream of making the big decisions, standing up for a cause, conquering that thing that keeps you bound, but every time you remotely attempt to break free... you can't get up off the stretcher of fear
- **Inability to fully trust**: you've been deceived, hurt, betrayed and now your stretcher is the inability to trust again...
- **Some awful sin in your past** that you cannot forgive yourself from
- **Financial ruin or poverty** that you can't seem to fix or break
- **A crushing sense of failure** or inadequacy

2. The relationships we invest in now will carry us later

3. The faith of friends releases our miracle!

[John 2:5]

"When Jesus saw how much faith they had, he said to the crippled man..."

We need relationships and friends in our life that will believe for us when we can't believe for ourselves!



SERMON

SMALL GROUPS

4. True friends will bring us closer to JESUS!

[Galatians 6:2-3]

Carry (*bear or transfer*) **each other's burdens**, and in this way fulfill the law of Christ. If you think you are too important to help someone, you are only fooling yourself. You are not that important.

*"More than anything else, God uses people to carry people!
More than anything else, God uses people to heal people!"*



Small Group Questions

1. Who are some people you have observed that have really life-giving relationships? What are the by-products of those healthy connections?
2. What does the stretcher, something limiting or debilitating to you whether by your choice or not, look like in your life? (i.e. anger, a physical condition, trust issues...)
3. If you could pick a few of the relationships right now that you think will carry you later, what qualities define them today? How did you come upon or attain these particular relationships? What barriers had to be broken for these relationships to develop?
4. How does our culture seem to deal with the "crippled" (emotionally, physically, socially, spiritually)? How are they encouraged to cope?
5. When was a time that the faith of friends released a miracle in your life? What did they believe for you or in you that you couldn't grasp?
6. Describe one event or season in your life when you had to "Be carried" through it.
7. How did their culture deal with people who were crippled for life? What barriers had to be broken for these friendships to develop? How intentional are we about the relationships we value?