

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT SMALL GROUPS?

We asked people about three types of “spiritual community experiences”: Small Groups, Spiritual Friendships, and Spiritual Mentors or Confidants.

Spiritual Friendships were the most common spiritual community experience with 50% of the total sample saying they met with a spiritual friend at least once a month.

A total of 43% reported that they regularly participated in small groups through their church. Chart 1 shows the level of small group participation increases most dramatically in the early stages of spiritual growth.

SPIRITUAL COMMUNITY EXPERIENCES INCREASE AS PEOPLE ADVANCE ALONG THE CONTINUUM

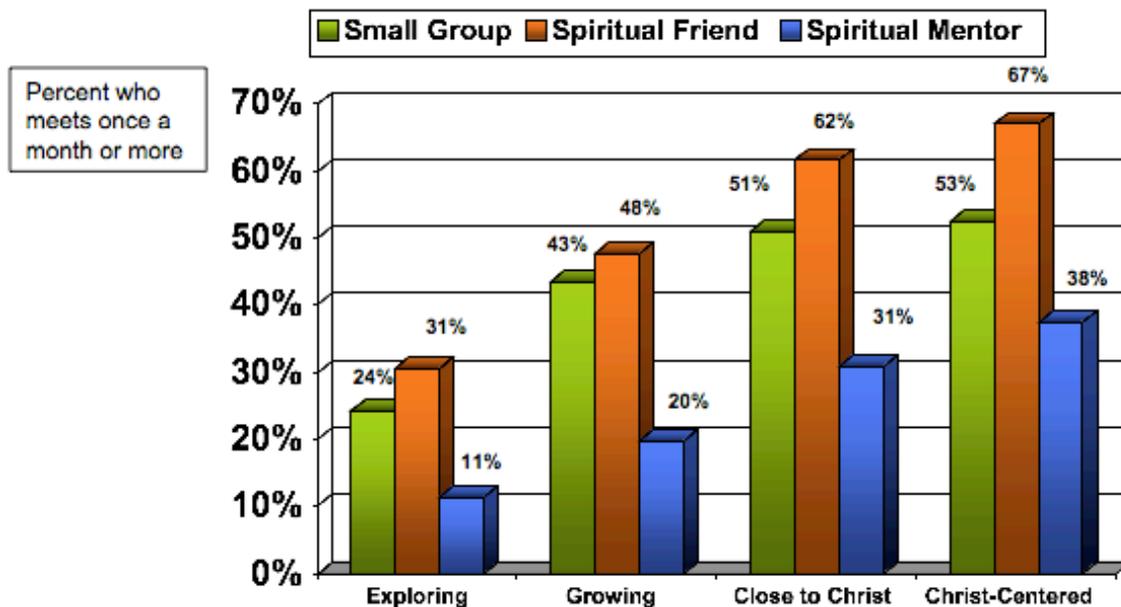


Chart 1: Relationships with spiritual friends are the dominant type of spiritual community experienced by all segments. Small groups are also important and tend to grow most rapidly early in the continuum.

Note the higher percentage of people reporting regular connections with spiritual friends, especially at the more advanced stages. The percentage reporting that they meet with a spiritual mentor or confidant also increases significantly across the continuum.

When asked which spiritual community experience is most important to their spiritual growth, Chart 2 shows that three out of four segments chose spiritual friendships.

SPIRITUAL FRIENDSHIP IS IMPORTANT FOR ALL SEGMENTS, ESPECIALLY THE EXPLORING AND CHRIST-CENTERED SEGMENTS

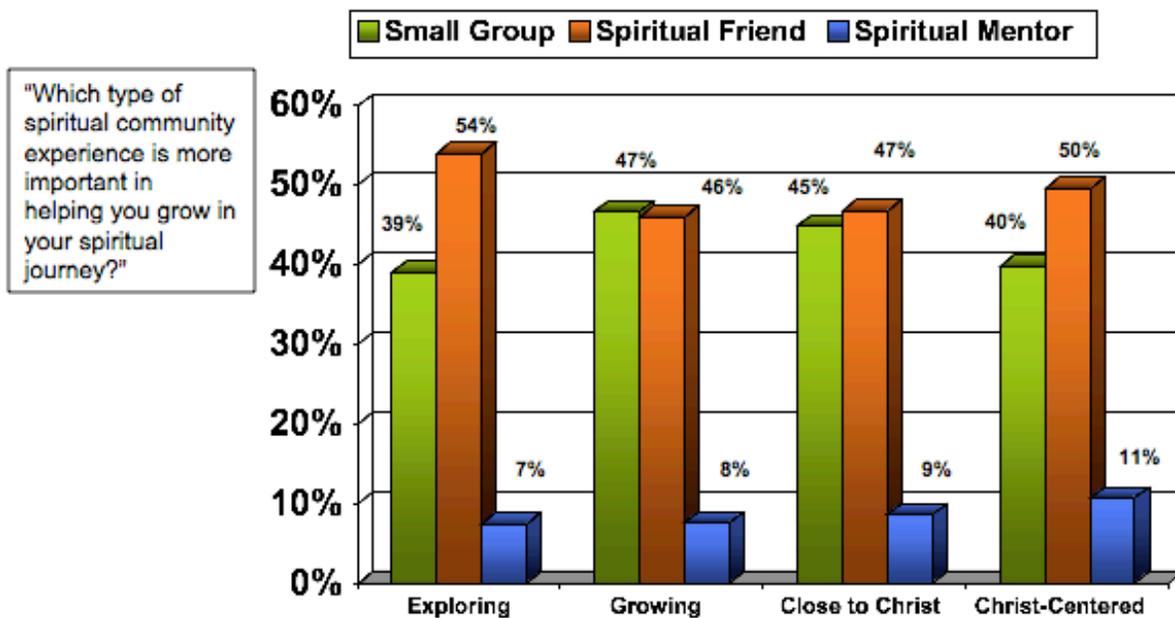


Chart 2: Small groups are also important but decline somewhat in significance as people advance along the continuum.

Chart 3 shows that the primary form of small group is a Bible study combined with community time.

WHILE SMALL GROUP TYPES VARY CONSIDERABLY, MOST HAVE BIBLE STUDY AS A PRIMARY PURPOSE

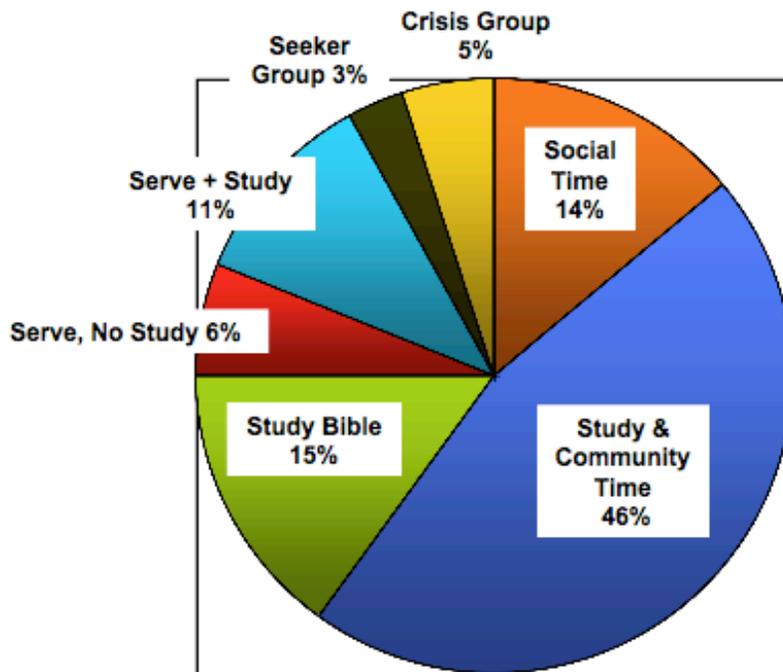


Chart 3: We see a wide range of church small group strategies, from a church where one-third of small groups are primarily social time to a church where 25% are dedicated solely to Bible study. Still most report the combination of study + community time as the dominant form of small group.

Phase 1

Interestingly, Chart 4 shows that the lowest ranked small group benefit is “Helps me learn about the Bible” for the three segments that are growing spiritually.

WHAT DO PEOPLE WANT FROM SMALL GROUP?

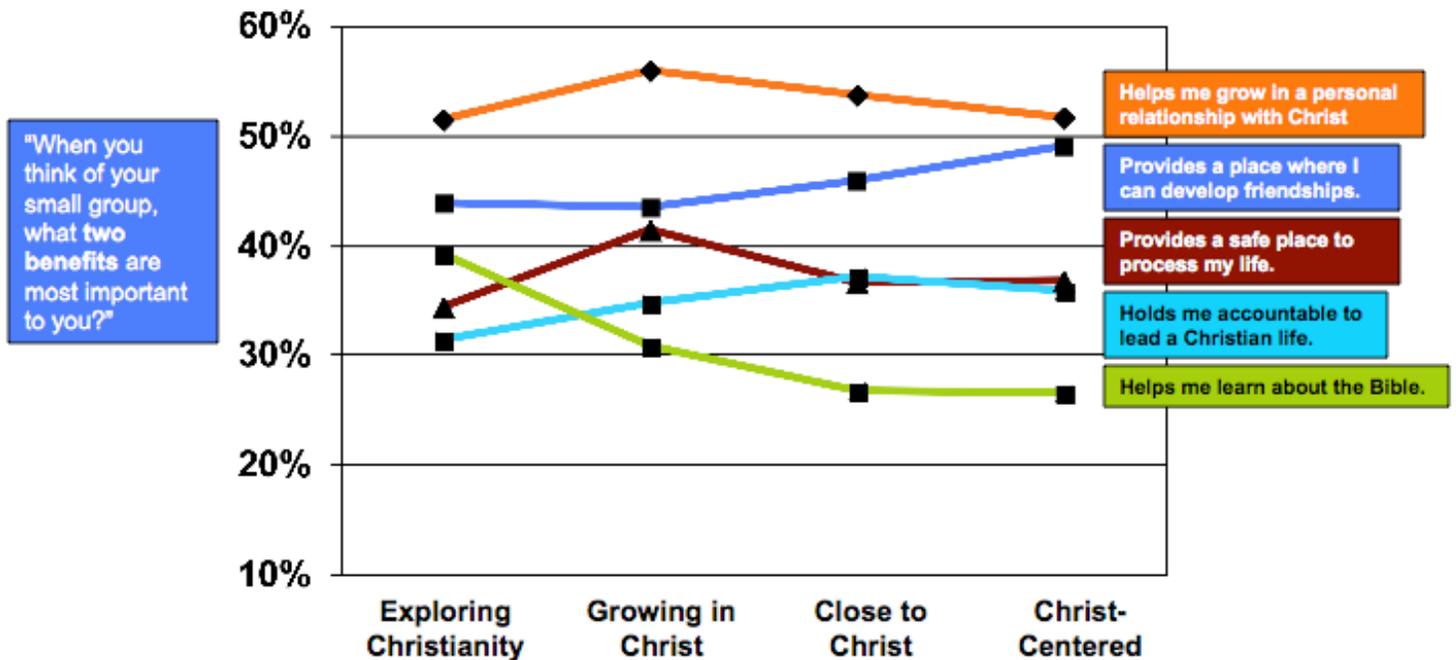


Chart 4: While the top benefits people want from small groups are similar, there's an interesting dip in the importance of "Helps me learn the Bible" as they advance along the spiritual continuum. In contrast, "Provides a place to develop friendships" increases in importance.

Phase 2

Observations: This information reinforces our insights based on the survey results that church-organized small groups seem to be most effective at catalyzing spiritual growth in the early stages. Small groups provide critical first community connections and early Bible studies. On the other hand, small groups appear to be less effective in the more advanced stages of spiritual growth, possibly because the Bible study role within the groups is less important.

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