

Six Habits of Spiritually Happy Men

Habit #2: Spiritually Happy Men Are in a Small Group

Unedited Transcript

Patrick Morley

Good morning men. We want to open our bibles ... if you would ... to Galatians chapter 6 verse 1 and why don't we go ahead and do a shout out this morning. We have a new group that started meeting just here in March. Rosco Freeman is the leader. It's the Fellowship Study ... part of the Fellowship Study church in Jersey City, New Jersey. Awesome. They're seven men. They've just started as I said. They're meeting bi-weekly, 7PM on Thursdays at Rosco's home and so they are men who have given their lives to Jesus and now want to grow in the word of God and to learn how to become disciples of our Lord. How about that? Would you join me giving them a rousing Man in the Mirror welcome.

One, two three. Hooah.

Welcome guys. We're glad to have you as part of our bible study. We're doing a series. It's called Six Habits of Spiritually Happy Men and so spiritual habits or disciplines if you'd like to call them that but something that we do repeatedly ... over and over until it actually becomes sort of second nature or a routine to us. What we're looking for are what are the things that differentiate men who are spiritually happy ... and no one is happy all the time. Everybody must suffer. It is through many sufferings that we enter the kingdom of God ... but as a general rule, what differentiates those men who are spiritually happy from those men who find that they are dead with occasional spurts of life.

Today we're going to talk about this. Habit number two. Spiritually happy men are in a small group. First up, why the leaders ... why are the leaders always making such a fuss about getting you into a small group? What's that about? What do they know that you don't know or what do they know that they want you to know? What is it that they have seen that makes them so passionate about getting you into a small group? Most of you here are in a small group. In fact if you've been here and you've been sitting in a table, you're at a small group here. Many of you are in small groups elsewhere. About half of you lead small groups elsewhere.

This is kind of leadership material this morning as well as personal reinforcement. Why all the fuss ... what have they seen ... what have you seen ... if you're one of those leaders ... that make you so passionate about getting them into small groups? I called a guy on the phone one day ... Tom ... and he and I were getting ready to do a business transaction that would require us to talk about three or four times in roughly six months intervals. I was selling him something over time and it was going to take time to complete the deal and so I called him for the first leg of the transaction.

I said, "Hey Tom. This is Pat. How are you doing?"

"Perfect. Just perfect."

I said, "Okay." Made a mental note of that. We'd already done the first leg of the transaction. Six months later, I called him up.

I said, "Hey Tom. This is Pat. How are you doing?"

"Perfect. Pat I am just perfect."

I thought to myself, "Okay. I kind of see where this is going." We went ahead and did the second leg of the transaction and then I called him six months later to complete the transaction as it turned out. We did that. I called him and I said, "Tom, this is Pat. How are you doing?" He said, "Man, I am perfect."

I have been thinking about it and so I said this to Tom. I said, "Tom, I don't think you understand the question that I'm asking you here today. I'm not asking how are you doing, I'm asking and I really want to know how are you really doing." He said, "Oh." Then Tom launched into a 30-minute long monologue. Never came up for air one time. Not one time in which he described one of the most audacious, tortured kind of business problems that any of us would ever have to endure and he had been going through this month after month after month.

All of these times that when I called him, "How are you doing Tom?"

"Perfect. Just perfect."

Why do leaders make such a fuss about getting you into a small group? Because most men live in isolation. Most men feel like they are forced to put on ... in the morning ... a game face and pretend that things are not the way they really are because if you want to get by, get along, get over in the world, you have the impression ... at least ... that you need to have it all together. When women have problems ... this is a generalization, generally true ... when women have problems, they tend to move toward relationships.

When men have problems they tend to move toward isolation and you've heard me say it here before and anybody who's ever watched National Geographic channel knows that the lion never goes after the herd. The lion always goes after the wildebeest that's been cut off from the herd. Why is that? If you've been here, you've heard me say this. Why is that? Because every predator understands what the strategic value of what? Isolation. Every predator understands the strategic value of isolation. Whether that's in the animal kingdom or in the criminal world ... think about sexual predators ... or in the spiritual realm ... 1st Peter 5:8, stay alert. Your enemy the devil, he prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Looking for someone, not for some group to devour.

Isolation. Why is it that leaders make such a fuss about getting you into a small group? Because when you're isolated you feel like you have to pretend that everything is perfect. Just perfect. Listen. In Christianity, loners are losers. Jesus ... another reason why leaders make such a fuss about getting you in a small group ... Jesus built his strategy for total global conquest by forming a small group and then giving them a "disciples making disciples" mindset.

Why do leaders make such a fuss about getting you in a small group? Because strategically this is one of the most ... Most of the spiritual disciplines are done in solitude but this is a habit that is done when are together with our people. We are made for relationships. My son got divorced. He's got a girlfriend and

he wrote this about it. I don't know how he was feeling about telling this about it but you can kind of imagine. You would be a little ... I wonder how dad's is going to take that I went back and said, "John, we are made for relationships. We are made for relationships."

Leaders make this big fuss about men being in a small group and here is why. It is the big idea. It's this. The Holy Spirit simply has more options to help you when you are in a small group. When you are isolated, who has more options? The predator that's after you. When you're in relationships, who has more options to help you? The Holy Spirit because he can work through those brothers ... or if you're in a couples group, those brothers and sisters who love you, who care about you, who get to know you, who want to see what's best for you, who are practicing neighbor love with you.

The Big Idea today is that **the Holy Spirit simply has more options when you are in a small group**. It is one of the habits of spiritually happy men ... spiritually happy guys. I've been through some depressions in my life. I think most of us have. I remember like when I was in the army, separated from home and waking up to this grizzly bear shouting in my face at 5AM, "Get out of bed soldier," and I remember just being so lonely. If I would just had some friends things would have probably been a lot different and I think that I would have had more options in my life if I would have had some more friends.

What can a small group do for you and through you. You should be at Galatians chapter 6 verse 1. Galatians chapter 6 verse 1 says this, "Brothers, if someone is caught in the sin you who are spiritual should shun him, make him feel like dirt and never have anything to do with him again." I'm sorry. We're supposed to be reading about what we're supposed to do, not what we actually do. Okay. "Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently but watch yourself or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ."

Maybe you've picked up a bad habit. Maybe you've returned to an old bad habit. Maybe you face two decisions in a moral dilemma both of which don't seem to make sense or just on a real practical level, maybe you've just been fighting with your wife all week long and you can't quite figure out what that's all about.

Having a small group of men who can carry that burden or if you make the wrong decision can help restore you gently, bring you back, what is the end result? At the end of that meeting, you're spiritually happy again. You're back on track. If you don't have that group, how do you get spiritually happy again? How do you get back on track? You don't and then chomp chomp chomp comes the devil, leaving those teeth marks all over your body, aches and pains all the way through the skin, right into the soul. Chomp chomp chomp.

Turn with me to Ecclesiastes chapter 4 verse 9. Ecclesiastes right after Proverbs, chapter 4 verse 9 ... and this idea of if somebody gets caught in a sin, restoring gently, I had this guy call me one day from our bible study. He'd been out of a job for quite some time and so he was really low and we talked for about half an hour. After about a half an hour, I realized that he had been sleeping in every day. He was depressed. He was sleeping in everyday so I asked him and I said, "How many people have you contacted recently?" He hadn't contacted anybody. I said, "How many interviews you've been on in the last few weeks?"

"I haven't been on any interviews." I said, "Okay. Let me ask you a question. You called me. What do you want here today? What do you want from me? Do you want a hug or do you want a kick in the pants?" He said, "Well. To tell you the truth, I guess why I called you is I need a kick in the pants."

I said, "Well, do you want me to hold you accountable?" He said, "That would be great." I said, "Okay. You call me at 4:00 this afternoon ... it was early morning ... you call me at 4PM this afternoon and tell me how many interviews you've scheduled."

That's the kind of the thing. Really, not providing for your family, sitting around. Call it an error in judgement, call it a sin whatever you want but the idea is that we can help each other. We can do ... a small group can do something that ... a small group of two is a small group by the way. My favorite small group is a group of two by the way. Small groups of three are good. Small groups of four, small groups of five, small groups of six, small groups of seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve. Whatever is the number that you like, that's the number for you. There's no formula in the bible about what size is a small group should be but what it can do for you is that it can give you the help that you need. It can give you the kick in the pants that you need. It can give you the hug that you may not be able to get any other way. It may give you the kick in the pants that nobody else in the world might love you enough and care enough about you to give you a pull.

By the way it's not just for you but it's so that you can do these same things for other people and fulfill part of your manifest destiny as a believer to love one another. Ecclesiastes 4:9, "Two are better than one because they have a better return for their work. One falls down, his friend can help him but pity the man who falls and has no one to pick him up," verse 12, "Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A chord of three strands is not easily broken."

In California, the redwoods grow to be 350 feet high. Some of them are 2000 years of age. These giant redwoods. Most people don't know that the roots of a redwood only go six to ten feet into the soil but they stand 350 feet tall in the air. What happens when terrific storms and winds come in and blow and beat against these redwoods, why don't they fall? They don't fall for two reasons. Number one, they grow very close together and then number two, their roots intermingle. They stand strong because they stand together.

What a great metaphor for how to be a towering tall man. That's the kind of thing that Ecclesiastes is talking about. Hebrews chapter 10 verse 24 if you would. Hebrews chapter 10 verse 24. I hear it all the time. I've teach it. Men gravitate to tasks, women gravitate to relationships. 4th of July, picnic. Women getting together talking about their kids and how they are doing. Men getting together talking about sports, tools, cars et cetera but there is a real danger in stereotyping men because men also are made for relationships and I cannot tell you the number of times when a man doesn't think he is going to .. he doesn't really think he is going to enjoy or get anything out of being part of a small group. He doesn't think he's even going to say anything.

Jim Seibert who used to be the administrator of our bible study, he came here. He sat there for six months and didn't say a word and this table leader had the wisdom to just give him that space, give him that respect. He came in very bruised. He didn't say a word for six months and then one day the table leader said, "Who would like to close in prayer today?" And Jim said, "I'll do that," and so Jim prayed after six months and after that you couldn't get him to shut up. While it might have taken six months for Jim, it doesn't take that long for most of us. We think we have nothing to say. No one will want to hear us and we're never going to .. we're going to zip our lips and that's that. Until somebody says something

that inspires us and the Holy Spirit falls on us because he has more options to help us when we're in a small group and we either unburden our heart and get help or we have something to say that helps somebody else carry their burden.

Hebrews chapter 10 verse 25, "Let us not give up" ... verse 24, "and let us consider how we may spur or stimulate inspire one another on toward love and good deeds." What can a small group do for you and through you? It can inspire you to love and good deeds. Those are the ... I mean there are many ways of saying but that's it. When you talk about called to live in Christ, equipped to live like Christ, set to live for Christ. Well, once you say to live for Christ what does that mean? That's love and good deeds. That's what it means.

A small group can spur you on to do that and guess what, through you can spur others on to do the love and good deeds that they want to do and that God wants them to do. Being in a group is so amazing. The groups that I've been in and most of my groups have been one on ones but we've got a leadership group that met for 25 years or something like that. My apologetics professor in seminar we went through all the arguments for God. The cosmological argument, the etiological argument, the anthropological argument and all and everything. We get down to the end of the class ... last day of class he says, "Now you've heard it all. All these different arguments but I wanted to tell you that more powerful than all these arguments for the existence of God combined is the power of a changed life."

A changed life. I know God is real because I have seen him in Jim Seibert. I know God is real because I saw him in Ken Moore and in the small group that I was in, the six of us that met for a couple of years right after I became a Christian Howard Dayton was part of that group. I know that God is real because I saw ... still do ... in Howard Dayton.

Let us hold unswervingly to this hope and let us consider how we can preach around love and good deeds and let us not give up meeting together. Let us not give up meeting together as some are in the habit of doing. A lot of people are in the habit of withdrawing. That's the bad habit. We're talking about the good habit. They're the spiritually unhappy ones. We're talking about how to be spiritually happy not how to be spiritually unhappy. Hey, the six habits of spiritually unhappy men...

Isolation. Loners are losers but let us encourage one another. Encouragement is the food of the heart and every heart is a hungry heart. Let us encourage one another all the more as you see the day approaching. Margaret Mead said, "Never doubt" ... anthropologist, certainly not a Christian but she said, "Never doubt the power of the small group to change the world. That's about the only way it has ever happened before."

Big idea today is this. **The Holy Spirit simply has more options to help you when you're in a small group** and then finally what makes for a really good small group. Two or more men, who want to work more closely with God. I do the shout outs with you each week but I also have a registration sheet where they're signing up to ... The leaders of these groups, everyone signs off on the same responsibilities and job descriptions that each of the leaders here at the bible study and the life study on Friday mornings signs off on.

We set a high bar here. By the way did you know that I fire each of your table leaders once a year. Every December 31st they're out of a job and why do we do that, well most informal organizations don't have an exit strategy so what happens is that you end up with all these people that their calling has changed

but they have no way to get out. We just have a way to get out so we have zero dead wood here in our leadership. Every year we give men an opportunity ... if the calling has changed to have a graceful exit and that we celebrate that. Instead of having them sleek off under the cover of darkness, embarrassed because they didn't do a good job for three years when they should have but given the opportunity to quit three years ago. That's a side bar but anyway we have this ...

You see, that's another aspect of small groups. A leadership team is a small group and we carry each other. We do it all. We just do it right around here. We really do. Here is what this guy Rosco says about his group. Rosco, this is what we say about your ... what you say about your group. These are men that have given their life to Jesus and now want to grow in the word and learn more about how to become disciples of the Lord. What makes for a really small group of some guys who really want to grow in the word and in the relationship with the Lord. That's tantamount.

Secondly is a leader who cares. Who really cares. Somebody needs to provide leadership. Everything boils down to leadership. Everything I've ever had that fell apart fell apart because of a leader failed. It wasn't because some person down the line failed it was because the leader failed. When we have a table leader that leaves the bible study and didn't disciple a replacement and that happens from time to time not always. Guess what, that table falls apart. It falls apart every single time. Having a leader who really cares about the guys at the table and loving them it makes for a really good group.

You can get those two things together and everything else figures itself out but a leader who really cares and some guys who really want to grow and you've got ... I tell you what. No DNFs there buddy. That's a picked crew that's going to figure it out. They are going to make the adjustments along the way in the race. They're going to finish the race. No DNFs there if you have the right leader who really cares and some guys who really want to grow but there are a couple of other things I'll tell you about.

A respect for the process of relationships. Oh my goodness. Actually this is right up there with the other two. Respect for the process of relationships. You have to manage your life against the fall. People have been bruised. They have been wounded. They have wounded others. Some people are just mean. Some people have been so damaged that you need to let them have six month to sit at the table and not say a word.

There is a process of relationships and it's ... it is not formulated. You basically have to walk with each person. That's why I like one on ones. You just walk out with that one person. Disciple-making is just basically ... it's one guy caring enough about another guy to take him under his wing and show him the ropes. Okay. In this respect for relationships, the process it means not judging ... at least out loud ... it means not trying to control their behavior and take that one home by the way ... work out that one with your wife ... then confidentiality ... making a covenant that what's said at the table stays at the table or in group stays in the group and what happens if a man comes and he's not given a voice ... if he doesn't have an opportunity to ... if you don't give him a voice to articulate then what happens? He stops coming.

By the way it's a sign of not really caring about a guy not giving them a voice. What happens if you interrupt a guy, try to talk over him? That violates the process of relationships. There are dozens of these relationship process things and every one of them makes a difference. Two or more guys who really want to grow, a leader who really cares, don't violate the process of relationships, staying on topic. In a small group guys, they want to end up talking about what, sports, tools, politics, business

deals. Stay on topic. If you're in a spiritual small group, stay spiritual. You can talk about those other things at breakfast after your group breaks up.

How can do that? Just on the tables we do these every now and then. The weekly one-hour accountability check up card. Everything that you want to know to keep your life on track, on the front and the back of a wall size card, they are on the table if you want them. Gosh, Dave would you make sure these get put up on the website so they can download those. Got it?

Here is the deal. You are either in a group or you're not in a group. If you're here you're in a group. If you're in a group you're either holding back or you're vulnerable. You may be leading a group or you may be ready to leave a group. You know one of the things I would love to see come out of this, because when you look at the chokepoint in Christendom today ... and we'd have a few and as movement we've addressed them. The first one was disconnected efforts. All the different ministries doing their own things and some people doing the same things and some people leaving other areas completely and then we solved that problem 20 years ago with the National Coalition of Men's Ministries.

Then the next chokepoint ... the next constraint holding back ministry discipleship advancing in America was a lack of good resources for men that were situationally relevant. In the movement we began talking to authors and speakers and asking them to develop resources for men. Now you have more resources than you could possibly know what to do with. 20 years ago it wasn't like that. Anyway there is some other checkpoints. Here is the one today. It's this. Disciples not making disciples. We have a Christian church today that is spiritually obese, filled with spiritual over-eaters who have been sitting around chomping on the word for themselves but have not also ... and it's not their fault. I don't think. Maybe for some it is but most of them, I don't think it's their fault. They have not been adequately inspired and challenged spurred on in love and good deeds to then turn around and do what Jesus said and make other disciples.

Disciples not making disciples. You've heard me say this before. Disciples not making disciples is an oxymoron. It's an eternally inconsistent statement. You can't even be a disciple if you're not making disciples. Some of you ... and this is what I hope will happen today ... and I'm hoping this ... I don't have enough faith to believe this but I wish this would go viral. I wish this could go viral and I just wish that men who have been the recipients of good discipleship would suck it up and get out there and start a group and start making other disciples because when that happens we are going to see an exponential increase in this men's discipleship and that solves a host of other problems down the stream and I found all that.

Here is the Big Idea for the day. This is the reason why small groups are just surviving but just because **the Holy Spirit has more options to help you when you're in a small group.** Let's pray.

Our dearest Father and Lord, thank you so much for first of all giving us relationships and then for laying out a plan for how we can be helped ourselves and how we can help others through small groups and then Lord I just pray that you take maybe some of the practical ideas that have either been talked about here, will be talked about in the groups or otherwise occur to the men and to really help each of these men to figure out, "I want to be spiritually happy. Maybe I already am but I want to be spiritually happy, maybe I'm not." What can a small group do to honestly answer the question what can a small group do to help me become that man or if I am already in a small group, I already am experiencing this spiritual joy then what can I do to help other men experience that too. We beseech wisdom. In your loving name we make this prayer Jesus. Amen

