



## What Are the Primary Characteristics of An Ideal Seed-Group in a PMA Bible Study or Church Plant?

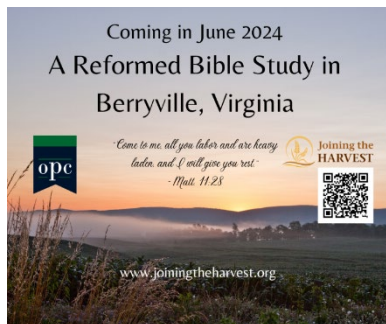
We are thankful that in the PMA right now we have a new bible study that has begun in Culpeper, Virginia, and we are praying and planning for another new bible study beginning in Berryville, Virginia, in early summer 2024. As we pray and plan, what are some of the primary characteristics of an **ideal seed-group** (often called a “core-group” as well)? Because church planting is front-line spiritual warfare as well as part of our sanctification (John 17:17-18; Eph. 6:10-20), we need to consider these characteristics, and pray that our God would faithfully gather groups that have a kind of built in potential for biblical success in growth in grace and fruitfulness. Jesus promises us that if we abide in Him, and His word abides in us, we will bear fruit that will last (John 15:1-16).

These characteristics can be easily summarized in seven, three-word sentences: (1) He sat down; (2) I need Jesus; (3) Please forgive me; (4) I die daily; (5) Here am I; (6) Pray for me; and (7) Come, Lord Jesus. Let us look briefly at each of these by asking specific questions.

These are a few questions that the RHM and the PMA Home Missions Committee are asking in evaluating the potential success of a bible study seed-group. (1) **He Sat Down**: Are the



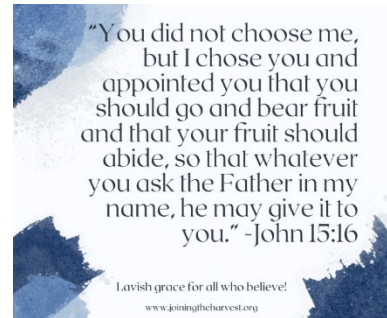
folks in this seed-group focused on Jesus and His gospel primarily? Do they truly believe that Jesus possesses all authority in heaven and on earth and has promised to build His church, storming the gates of hell? Are they committed to serving ultimately Him and not self (Heb. 1:3-4; Matt. 28:18-20)? Have they demonstrated their humility and obedience before Christ by being a baptized and faithful member of His Church? Are they presently serving Christ in a congregation of saints? (2) **I Need Jesus**: Are the folks in this seed-group self-aware of their own need for Jesus each day, especially in doing the challenging work of spiritual warfare and sanctification of potentially establishing a new congregation of saints? Are they aware of their weaknesses and watchful of the sins that easily beset them, while being confident in the transformative power of Jesus and His Holy Spirit that makes us fruitful (John 15:1-17; Gal. 5:22-26)? (3) **Please Forgive Me**: Are the folks in this seed-group aware



of the sins that easily beset them, and are they daily repenting of their own sins, removing planks from their own eyes, and living by faith in Jesus’s promise of goodness and mercy towards them (Matt. 7:1-5; Heb. 3:12-13, 19; 12:1-3)? Are the folks in this seed-group characterized as those who seek to forgive and to show mercy for the glory of God and the sake of unity and peace (Matt. 6:12; 18:35)? (4) **I Die Daily**: Are the folks in this seed-group those who are seeking to die daily to sin and seek to live unto righteous, joyous obedience in Christ by His Spirit (Deut. 10:12-13; John 15:9-12)? Are the folks in this study and seed-group because they want God’s dream and will fulfilled in the life of this potential congregation, or because they

are looking merely for something for themselves? Are they merely serving convenience or comfort, or are they seeking to die daily to serve Christ? If the folks in a seed-group are not willing to die from the outset to Christ and to others, then there is no hope of establishing a Gospel-oriented, fruitful congregation (John 12:24-26; Phil. 2:1-5; Eph. 4:1-3). We are by nature those who seek greatness and recognition in the wrong way. We must be willing to die and as our Lord Jesus says: “The Son of Man has come not to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the

earth and dies, it remains alone; but **if it dies, it bears much fruit**" (John 12:24). (5) **Here Am I**: Are the folks in this seed-group servants? Are they seeking to be great in Christ by His Spirit in being great servants of others, considering others more significant than themselves? Are they looking for how they can be a blessing or are they merely seeking more convenience and comfort? Are they seeking to serve so that others might prosper and be fruitful and the congregation would thrive? Are they serving their present congregation seeking to use their gifts faithfully (John 13:14-17)? (6) **Pray For Me**: Are the folks in this seed-group prayer warriors? Are they those who pray regularly in seeking the LORD in private devotion, family worship, public worship, and praying at all times and in all ways for others? Are they praying in the power of the Spirit knowing that nothing will be accomplished without prayer and full dependence upon the Lord Jesus Christ (Zech. 4:6; Matt. 7:7; Eph. 6:10-18)? I have found that there are **four primary bible study/church plant poisons or killers**: 1. **Selfishness** (Phil. 2:1-4); 2. **Impatience** (Eph. 4:1-3; 1 Cor. 13:4); 3. **Unforgiveness/Judgmental Spirit** (Matt. 5:3-12); 4. **Over-love of Convenience/Comfort** (John 17:17-18; James 4:1-6). Does this seed-group desire a bible study or new congregation primarily for their own convenience or comfort? Or ultimately and primarily does this seed-group desire to glorify the Father in Christ by the Holy Spirit (Eph. 2:18), enjoy the faithful worship of the Triune God (Heb. 12:25-29), the unity, fruitfulness, peace and fellowship of the saints (Eph. 4:1-3), and the seeking and saving the lost (Luke 19:10)!? Are they praying against their own propensity to selfishness/vainglory, impatience with God and others, lack of mercy, and the god of convenience/comfort? Are they praying for boldness in prayer in evangelism and inviting sinners to join them so that Christ will be build His church not merely through transfers, nor merely through covenant children (although these are wonderful!), but through new converts? (7) **Come, Lord Jesus**: Are the folks in this seed group serving eagerly in anticipating the immanent return of Jesus Christ? Do they have a misplaced emphasis on politics or mere earthly powers to solve the problems and miseries of this present age, or are they more ultimately concerned with God's wrath abiding on unrepentant sinners, looking with hope to the Gospel alone as the power of God unto salvation for all who believe (John 3:35; Rom. 1:16-32; 3:20-26)?! Are they living as



good Spirit-filled stewards of their time and resources, seeking in all things to please the Lord (2 Cor. 5:9-21)? Are they living ultimately for the "Well done, my good and faithful servants" (Matt. 25:21, 23)? Are they living with an urgency in evangelism in faithfully living out their faith, and praying with compassion for and inviting their neighbors to join them in the study and the potential new church plant because they are ambassadors of Christ who desire to establish a Gospel-Embassy, and they know today is the day of salvation (2 Cor. 5:18-6:2)? "Whoever loves his life loses it...will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him" (John 12:25-26).

These are seven, three-word characteristics that can be most useful in evaluating the spiritual health of every Christian, but particularly of a seed-group meeting with hopes to be a church plant and mission work one day. Remember, these characteristics can only come through the grace of the Lord Jesus, and by His powerful Holy Spirit, but come, they will, in fullness according to Christ's promise: "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, He will give it to you" (John 15:16; cf. 2 Peter 1:3-11). Join me in praying to our faithful God to call, gather, form and transform people into fruitful bible studies with a goal of becoming worshipping congregations of the Lord Jesus Christ, embassies of the New Heaven and the New Earth!

I am your brother and servant in Jesus, Charles Biggs, Regional Home Missionary of the PMA

Get on our direct email distribution list for announcements/newsletters: <https://joiningtheharvest.org/contact/>