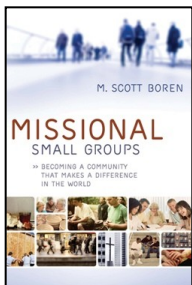
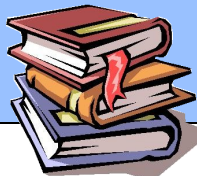


Library News

By Dan Benson



Book Review: *Missional Small Groups* by M. Scott Boren

In *Missional Small Groups: Becoming a Community that Makes a Difference in the World*, author M. Scott Boren seeks to help us move beyond what he calls the normal "huddle and cuddle" of small groups, in which we learn a little more about the Bible and get to know each other better, and learn to be communities through which God reaches into the lives of those outside our church's walls. Boren, a pastor at Woodland Hills Church in St. Paul, Minnesota, and the author of several other books on small groups and missional thinking, divides *Missional Small Groups* into two sections - "Listening" and "Practicing." The first part lays out the difference between normal small groups and missional small groups. The second introduces the various practices common to missional groups.

Being missional means being on mission to reach out to those who don't know Christ. But it means more than doing projects or instituting programs. Boren challenges us to make being missional a lifestyle. In its simplest form, being missional is, to quote St. John of the Cross, "putting love where love is not." ... We can do all kinds of good things such as giving money, donating to the food pantry, investing personally in building projects ... but none of that means that we actually

love. To love means being in relationship with others who do not have that love." This implies continued interaction with people and doing so genuinely, without hidden agendas or without "our Bible up our sleeve," our true objective being to get a person to pray a prayer or come to church.

Each small group then is an entity or community of believers in its own right charged with the responsibility to demonstrate this love by engaging with others. Boren prefers using the word "engagement" instead of evangelism, since it's not by a program but by continually interacting with other people who live in what he metaphorically calls "the neighborhood" - a group of people defined by place or relationship. "To be in a neighborhood is to be relational. And to be relational is to be present," Boren writes. Think of what it would mean for us as individuals or as a small group to maintain a presence in our neighborhood, extended family or workplace. This kind of ongoing interaction and engagement requires from most of us a change in lifestyle and adjustments in our schedules, he points out. It's difficult to do, he admits. Boren says this kind of lifestyle and mindset are how "those called to be missionaries in a foreign country think about ministry. They are not called to the entire world or to the entire country.... They think about the local situation and the specific people within that local context." Do we think of our "neighborhood" as a mission field?

The final chapters of *Missional Small Groups* are to me by themselves worth the price of the book. It would be worthwhile, I think, for a group of people interested in applying the Great Commission on a local level to study this book together.

*"Missional Small Groups" is available
in the Friedens library.*