

Cheryl Riegger-Krugh: *Empty Seats*



Love Small Groups

I had always been a part of a small group in various churches I have attended since 1979. I love small groups; they're the heart of accountability and real study together—a committed group for you, you can really get to know them and pray for each other and people know when you're going through a hard time.

Finding The Chapel

About a year ago, I was interviewing for a job here in Ohio. I had the sense that the gentleman I was talking with probably attended a great church. I asked him where he attended and he responded The Chapel. I looked it up on the Web, and when I would visit in Ohio before finally getting the job and moving here, I would attend. I just really liked it. It was very much like my last church that I loved, so I knew right away I would stay, and not have to search for a church.

Getting Lost in a Big Church

It was so big, and you can decide if you just want to be part of the mass of people, and never really get to know anyone. Even if you sit in the same place every Sunday, you don't get to know them. Maybe hello, but a lot don't even do that. In fact, one time, Pastor Knute specifically said, "Take three minutes to talk to someone you don't know after the service." So I talked to the couple next to me. I think it is really a good idea, just to get people in the habit of it. Most people get up, turn and walk out, without a word.

Empty Seats

But I still was feeling like I didn't know anybody, so last fall when they announced that there would be an informational Home ABF Open House, I decided I was going to go! I was early and one of the first people to sit down in a room set up with about 50 empty chairs. Sandi Brackus (who I didn't know at the time) came in and sat down right next to me! This seemed very unusual, most people leave at least a few seats between them, but not Sandi! Who does that? I looked at her, and thought, "I want to be in your Home ABF."

What I've Learned

We went through the series of Romans together, which John Brackus led and did a great job. I am really looking forward to this fall when we will do *The Anchor of the Soul* book. We have some great expectations of how that will open up a lot of good discussion. There's just a great spirit about this group, and I think we're just going to really soar with this book study. I have given that book away to so many people. It is such a good outreach.

In a Nutshell

What a powerhouse my HABF is! We have insightful teaching and discussion, group worship, acceptance, knowing everyone who is lifted up on the prayer chain, safety and support in sharing our praises and prayer requests, potluck dinners and other events, the sense of a close-knit family.

Final Thoughts

Everybody needs a small group. It is the only way you can get to know people in a big church. It would be so easy to get lost and feel lonely, but you don't have to stay there. It's great too to have a Home ABF meeting during the week, to kind of keep you accountable through the week, and a chance to share, and have reality checks. It would be very hard to feel that sense of community without having a core group of believers who know you.