

REDEEMER SMALL GROUP LEADERSHIP TRAINING

Part VII – Multiplying Your Ministry

Group Multiplication

God and the Open Chair

Since the beginning of time, it has been God's desire to create a people who would have fellowship with Him for all eternity. Though He enjoyed perfect fellowship with a tri-unity (Father, Son, Holy Spirit), God's desire was to expand that community to all who put their faith in Him. From Genesis to Revelation, we see God's heart in reaching people and including them in this new community:

- The promise of a Messiah (Gen 3:15)
- The promise to Noah (Gen 9:8-17)
- The promise to Abraham to make him a great nation (Gen 12:1-5)
- God's promise to make the Israelites His people (Ex. 6:7)
- God's promise to David of an eternal kingdom and a place for God's people to dwell (2 Sam. 7:1-7)
- God desires to be known among all nations of the earth (Ps. 67)
- The invitation for all to come and be part of God's community (Is. 55:1-3)
- The promise of a Messiah who would become known throughout the earth (Mic. 5:2-5)
- God will be known among all the nations of the earth (Zeph. 3:8-10, 20)
- The invitation for all to come and receive Christ (Matt. 11:28-30)
- The command to make disciples of all nations (Matt. 28:18-20)
- The promise that all who believe will become part of a new community (John 3:16)
- The power of the Holy Spirit will enable all to witness for Christ (Acts 1:8)
- The world will not hear the Gospel unless we take it to them (Rom 10:14-15)

As you can see, God has been inviting people into his "open chair" for centuries. This is evident in a personal way in the life of Jesus. Jesus used the concept of the open chair to develop relationships with Nicodemus, the woman at the well, the woman caught in adultery, and the 12 disciples – and His invitation continues today. Andres opened the chair for Peter, Barnabas opened the chair for Paul, and Paul opened the chair for Timothy. Part of discipleship is opening the chair to those who are not involved in biblical community. This includes seekers, fringe Christians, and committed believers who are seeking fellowship.

Filling the Open Chair

Many of you may be asking, "How do I fill the empty chair?" Here are some steps to think through and a chart that will help you brainstorm the names of people who could potentially be added to your group.

Go over "Filling the Chair" handout

Inviting Seekers to Small Groups

Not all groups are prepared to receive seekers. Either the nature of the material being studied or the personalities of members of the group prohibits them from effectively welcoming seekers. You want to be sensitive in the following areas:

Go over "Inviting Seekers to Small Groups" handout

Birthing

Tips to prepare you for birthing

Birthing is the term use for the process of group multiplication. The analogy of birthing is appropriate. Birthing involves pain, separation, and some sense of sadness for what has been lost. But it also involves celebration, joy, and appreciation for the new life that has been given and for what has been gained.

Go over “Birthing” handout

FILLING THE OPEN CHAIR

Adapted from "Leading Life-Changing Small Groups" by Bill Donahue

This is only a general process for inviting people to your group. It will vary from group to group.

Step 1: Before you begin inviting new members

- Involve everyone in the process. Everyone in your group should invited people to the group
- Teach your group about the open chair
- Regularly pray for God to fill the open chair
- Develop a list of potential members

Step 2: How to invite new members

- Develop relationships prior to the group meeting
- Explain the vision of your group to the potential member
- Ask them to pray about joining the group
- Allow them to meet other members of the group before they ever attend a group meeting
- Allow them to attend a few meetings before they have to make a final commitment

Step 3: After new members attend the group

- Affirm the newcomer and the one who brought him or her
- Have everyone briefly retell their own stories
- Celebrate what is happening in your group
- Don't add people too quickly. Allow the group to assimilate new members and grow together for a season before inviting additional people

Inviting Seekers to Small Groups

Not all groups are prepared to receive seekers. Either the nature of the material being studied or the personalities of members of the group prohibits them from effectively welcoming seekers. You want to be sensitive in the following areas:

- Focus on the needs of the seeker, not your personal agenda.
- If you discuss a Bible passage, use a version of the Scripture that is seeker friendly
- Stay away from religious lingo or religious clichés such as "Halleljuah," "Amen, brother!" or terms like, "Lamb of God" or "I'm just trusting in the Blood." Such terminology is unfamiliar to seekers and might scare them away because they will feel like they don't fit in the group.
- Focus on relevancy. Don't get too caught up in theological arguments or distinctions. Stick with the basic truths of Scripture.
- Allow seekers to make comments that might appear strong or opinionated. Don't argue with them. Thank them for their input and help the group respect the seeker's questions or point of view. Listen more than you talk!
- Keep prayers simple. Use normal, conversational language when speaking to God. Help a seeker see that prayer is simply talking with God and not some religious jargon.

BIRTHING

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Tips to Prepare for Birthing

Birthing is the term used for the process of group multiplication. The analogy of birthing is appropriate. Birthing involves pain, separation, and some sense of sadness for what has been lost. But it also involves celebration, joy, and appreciation for the new life that has been given and for what has been gained.

- Cast a vision for birthing from the onset of the group
- Prepare the apprentice for group leadership
- Help the ground understand that their purpose is to give life to other groups
- Help the group catch a vision for those who are not yet in Christian community
- Begin the process of subgrouping several months before birthing. This means that the apprentice leader and the leader each take members of the small group and meet with them separately. This often occurs in two rooms of the same building. However, it allows group members to begin to feel the process of separation from other group members or from the apprentice.
- The leader and apprentice should each be seeking new apprentices in preparation for birthing
- New apprentices and members should be brought to the subgroups
- Begin meeting as subgroups for the entire meeting time
- At the time of birth, celebrate the beginning of a new group

Day of Birth

Like any birthday, this is a time for celebration. As the new group begins to finally separate from the existing group, it's time to gather together and celebrate new life. Here are some ways to celebrate the joy and experience the sadness of a group birth on the day of birth.

- Have a time of celebration for the birth
- Hold a time of prayer as you commission and bless the new group
- Recognize and affirm the new leadership in each group
- Allow members to express their feelings of celebration and sadness
- Plan a time when the two groups all come together again to reunite (probably in 4 to 6 weeks)
- Have a time of communion together and share the victories and blessings of the previous group
- Spend time praying about the future of both groups and what God might do to help each group grow spiritually and numerically
- Have each member write a letter to the rest of the group expressing their feelings and thankfulness and respect
- Take pictures or videos of the groups as you prepare to birth
- Set a schedule for a few planned social events together in the future so that the group reunites on a regular basis

Reducing the Trauma of Birthing

To reduce the trauma of birthing:

- Talk about the goal of birthing from the beginning. Talk about birthing often and optimistically. If birthing is sprung on the group, they will resist
- Set up the apprentice to succeed by giving him/her leadership opportunities
- Honor “core units” of two or three who cannot be split up
- Allow for “gestation” by letting the “baby” develop an identity within the “mother” (*meet in separate rooms in the same building for a period of time.*)
- Have a “birth party” when the actual birth occurs
- Allow for “nursing”; periodically getting the two groups together after the birth
- Encourage grief work
- Prepare to strategically add new members to your group
- Celebrate “grandchildren” – groups developed out of the group you birthed!
- Small group leaders should meet with individual group members after a group has birthed in order to process the birth on a one-on-one basis