

# Developing Dynamic Small Groups in Your Church



A Training Course in Eight Sessions

**Participant's Guide**

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Session One  
Small Groups: Part of God's Kingdom Plan

1. Created (and Redeemed) for Community

Genesis 1:24

John 17:20 - 23

The Universal Human Need

*“The silent churning at the core of our beings is the ... need to know and be known, to understand and to be under-stood, to possess and to be possessed, to belong unconditionally and forever without fear of loss, betrayal, or rejection...It is the search...for the freedom to be who we really are.” Gilbert Bilezikian*

2. Moses' Method vs. the Jethro Principle (Exodus 18)

Q. What were the weaknesses with Moses' leadership style?

Q. Why did God use his father-in-law to show him a better way? Why not speak directly to Moses?

3. Jesus' Model

Q. Why 12 group members? Why not 20 - or 50? What does this say about effective/ineffective church leadership?

*“Your success will not depend so much upon your knowledge and accomplishments, as upon your ability to find your way to the heart. By being social and coming close to the people, you may turn the current of their thoughts more readily than by the most able discourse.” White, Gospel Workers, p193*

4. The New Testament Church:

*Acts 5:42*

*Romans 16:5 etc.*

Explosive growth:

- Acts 1:15      120
- Acts 2:41      3000+
- Acts 4:4        10,000+
- Acts 5:14      +++

5. Small Groups in Reformation and Revival

a) Martin Luther

b) John Wesley

c) John Whitfield

## 6. Small Groups in the Contemporary World

- Eight Characteristics of Growing Churches (NCD survey)
  - a) Empowering leadership
  - b) Gift-oriented lay ministry
  - c) Passionate spirituality
  - d) Functional structures
  - e) Inspiring worship service
  - f) Holistic small groups
  - g) Need-oriented evangelism
  - h) Loving relationships

“If we were to identify any one principle (in growing churches) as the most important - even though our research shows that the interplay of all basic elements is important - then, without a doubt, it would be the multiplication of small groups.” Natural Church Development, p 33

## 7. Preparing for the Second Advent

*“The formation of small companies as a basis of Christian effort is a plan that has been presented to me by One who cannot err.” White, Evangelism 115*

- Suggest an alternative word for:

"small companies" \_\_\_\_\_ "basis" \_\_\_\_\_

"Christian effort" \_\_\_\_\_ "cannot err" \_\_\_\_\_

- What Small Groups Will Do for You and Your Church:
  - They will help you and your fellow believers grow as disciples of Jesus
  - They will build deep relationships between believers and a strong sense of community in the church
  - They will help believers develop their spiritual gifts, releasing the ministry potential of the church, and freeing pastors for the specific work they have been called to do
  - They will help more people come to faith in Christ

## Session Two

# Life-Changing Small Groups: Some Definitions

A. The purpose of small groups: to develop \_\_\_\_\_

- Building relationships between believers
- Building relationships with those outside the family circle

B. Definitions

1. The effective cell or small group is H \_\_\_\_\_

- a small number of people (3-12) who meet together for Bible study to:

- grow in their relationship with God
- grow in their relationship with each other
- reach out to share what they have with others

Christ's holistic community includes the majority of church functions in its life together, including worship, evangelism, fellowship, etc. as suggested in the following small group mission statement:

*“To connect people relationally in groups for the purpose of growing in Christ-likeness, loving one another, and contributing to the work of the church, in order to glorify God and make disciples of all nations.”*

2. The effective small group is the basic \_\_\_\_\_ of the church.

The Bible uses the analogy of the human body to describe the relationship between Christ and His church. The cell is the basic building block of the body. Do you see a parallel in the relationships of the small group or cell to the larger church body?

Note: compare this concept with Ellen White's description of the importance of small groups included in point 7 of the notes for session one. Discuss the significance of this concept and how it might be applied in your church

3. The effective small group is \_\_\_\_\_

- Not the same as preaching
- Not the same as teaching
- Everyone learns from everyone else

4. The effective small group is a basic Christian community. The main purpose of the group is to make \_\_\_\_\_ "available" both to those who already have a relationship with Him and those who Have not yet met Him

C. The Two "wings" of the small group church

1. Corporate Wing Functions:

- Overall Coordination
- Celebration Worship
- Teaching the Word
- Unity of the Body
- Resourcing ministry
- Supporting Leaders
- Reaching the World
- Public Evangelism
- Financial Oversight

2. Community Wing Functions

- Abiding in Christ
- Body Life Fellowship
- Edification of the Body
- Equipping the Saints
- Ministry to the hurting
- Witnessing to the lost
- Care of the "new babies"
- Mutual accountability
- Application of the Word
- Leadership development
- Leadership co-ordination
- Prayer mobilization

Can you see this "two-winged" structure of the corporate wing and the community wing working in your church? What do you see as the principle obstacles which could prevent this from happening?

D. Small Groups: not just a good idea, but a GOD idea. Imagine the difference it could make in your church!! If you are serious about growing your church, how would you mark your church as it is now in the following areas, with (1) being very poor and (5) being excellent. Then make the matter of small groups and growth the subject of prayer.

Every member in ministry	1	2	3	4	5
Cost effective	1	2	3	4	5
Exponential growth	1	2	3	4	5
Faithfulness in stewardship	1	2	3	4	5
Holistic ministry	1	2	3	4	5
Continuous harvesting	1	2	3	4	5

## Session Three

# Small Group Values: the Key to Growth

- It's one thing to know there is a place called Heaven...
- ...it's another to understand \_\_\_\_ Heaven is such a great place
- What made the message of Jesus so attractive was the kind of person He was
  - He spoke more about kingdom \_\_\_\_\_ than theological doctrine

### A. What are "values"?

- Values \_\_\_\_\_ us
- They determine \_\_\_\_\_ we do what we do and where we are going in life
- They make us who we are

The Values of the Kingdom should therefore be our values

Discuss for a moment: What makes one Sabbath-keeping church warm and welcoming, and another cold and critical, when they clearly believe the same things?

### B. The Life-Changing Energy Source of Small Groups

- John 3:3,5
- Ephesians 4:23-32
- Is it possible to facilitate (or block) the flow of the Holy Spirit in His life-transforming work?

### C. The Values which Drive Small Groups

- Jesus at the center
- Every member in ministry
- Every member growing
- Loving community

- Loving the lost
- Accountability to obey the commands of Christ

*"We live in a society which is heartily sick of Christianity but which has yet to encounter Jesus."*  
(Stuart Murray)

#### D. Every Believer a Minister

Every Christian is:

- \_\_\_\_\_ for ministry (Eph 2:10)
- \_\_\_\_\_ into ministry (I Peter 2:9,10)
- \_\_\_\_\_ for ministry (I Peter 4:10)
- \_\_\_\_\_ for ministry (Matt 28:18-20)
- \_\_\_\_\_ to minister (Matt 20:26-28)
- \_\_\_\_\_ for ministry (Eph 4:7,11,12)
- \_\_\_\_\_ for ministry (I Cor 12:27)

The pastor's first work...

*"The best help that ministers (pastors) can give the members of our churches is not sermonising, but planning work for them."* White, Testimonies vol 6 page 49

It's a crime...

*"God's work is retarded by \_\_\_\_\_ in His power to use the common people to carry forward His work successfully."*  
(White, Review and Herald July 16 1895)

Just a Lay Member?

*"'Laity' is a word derived from the Greek word for 'people' and it means all the people of God. It is a term of incredible honour. In Christ all the laity become ministering persons. The laity are the ministers. They are the means by which Jesus continues to minister in the world in the power of the Spirit."* Paul Stevens

#### E. Other Values which Drive Small Groups

Prayer	Affirmation	Openness and honesty
Availability	Sensitivity	Confidentiality
Multiplication	_____	_____

Are there others you would add? Which two of the above are priority for you? Why? Discuss your answer with two or three other people and pray that the practice of these values will result in a more Spirit-energised church.

## Session Four

# Small Group Meetings, Small Group Life

### A. The Four Parts of a Small Group Meeting

#### 1. Welcome

- Greeting and welcome
- Time to “catch up” with each other
- The ice-breaker - important because:

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#### 2. Worship

- Worship is the experience of \_\_\_\_\_ the presence of Jesus
- Use music, silence, testimony, prayer, Scripture. Are there other forms of worship you can suggest which might be effective in a small group setting?

#### 3. Word

- Bible study should be \_\_\_\_\_
- Three questions:
  - What is this text saying?
  - What is this text saying to me/us?
  - What are we going to do about it?
- Characteristics of relational Bible study
  - Based more on real life experience than on a collection of doctrinal texts
  - More concerned with making Christianity real than with proving a point
  - Concerned not only with the original characters associated with the story, but where we see ourselves in it
  - Accepts all opinions as equally valid
  - It allows the group to grow together even when there is disagreement

- Why do you think relational Bible study has such potential for growth?

#### 4. Witness: Praying for Growth

- Spirit-led prayer
- Informal, usually seated
- Conversational prayer
- Smaller prayer groups
- Special prayer for individuals

#### B. The “Afterglow”

- Begin and end the meeting on time
- Simple refreshments afterwards
- Informal: some leave, some stay
- Sometimes the most important time of sharing

#### C. Group Life Outside Group Meetings

- Social events
- Community service
- Church involvement
- Retreats
- Mentoring

#### 7. Four Stages of Small Group Development

- (i) Adventure
- (ii) Discovery
- (iii) Development
- (iv) Maturity

# Session Five

## The Goal of Small Groups: Holiness and Harvest

*"Go, then to all peoples everywhere and make them my disciples...and I will be with you."*  
(Matthew 28:19,20)

### A. A Disciple is...

- An apprentice
- An apprentice-maker

### B. The Two Disciplines of Discipleship

#### 1. Edification

- . Building community
- *"Let all things be done for \_\_\_\_\_ the church"*  
(I Corinthians 14:27)

*"He gave gifts... to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be \_\_\_\_\_"*  
(Ephesians 4:8,12)

- Building believers

*"Therefore encourage one another and build \_\_\_\_\_"*  
(I Thessalonians 5:11)

- Believers Grow:

- Through personal spiritual disciplines
- Through ministry of spiritual gifts

*"God has so ordained things that we grow in the Spirit only through the frail instrumentality of one another."* Alan Jones

- Through accountable relationships
- Through mentoring

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- People grow faster in small groups

*"I believe that people grow at least \_\_\_\_\_ faster when they're in small group and attending weekly worship celebration on (Sabbath) than if they just attended the service itself." Dale Galloway*

## 2. Evangelism

- Growth potential of groups

A small group church of 50 members growing by 20% per year could grow to \_\_\_\_\_ members after 20 years

- The challenge of evangelism in western society

- Reaching the unchurched majority
- Post-modern thinking
- Bridging cultural differences

- The Engel scale

- 8 No awareness of God
- 7 Awareness of God
- 6 Some knowledge
- 5 Understand basics
- 4 Grasp implications
- 3 Positive attitude
- 2 Intention to act
- 1 Decision to act
- +1 New Creature

- The friendship evangelism process

Stage 1:  
Friendship

Stage 2:  
Christian Friendship

Stage 3:  
Adventist Friendship

- Why small groups work well in evangelism

- encourage teamwork
- offer a bridge for shy people
- personal and informal
- maximum participation
- flexible
- minimum organisation
- localized evangelism
- natural and spontaneous witness

In your opinion which two of the above characteristics are the most important for your own personal style?

## Session Six

# Small Group Leadership

### A. The Role of Small Group Leaders in the Future Church

- The shape of your future church may well be determined by the quality of your small group leaders...  
...because the church began as a \_\_\_\_\_ small group, and \_\_\_\_\_ was its Leader

### B. Qualities of Small Group Leaders

#### As special people

- Called
- Available
- Gifted
- Teachable
- Visionary

#### As ordinary people

- They live in the real world
- They struggle with their faith and don't hide the fact
- They don't know all the answers and are willing to admit it

Small group leaders are all different, but they have one thing in common:

...they \_\_\_\_\_ Jesus, people, and the church

### C. The Small Group Leader as a Shepherd

- I Thessalonians 2:8

### D. The Small Group Leader as Facilitator

- One who \_\_\_\_\_ others
- One who \_\_\_\_\_ others

### E. The Small Group Leader's Job Description

- \_\_\_\_\_ group life
- \_\_\_\_\_ responsibility
- \_\_\_\_\_ and develops gifts in group members
- \_\_\_\_\_ apprentice leader

- \_\_\_\_\_ small group values
- \_\_\_\_\_ everyone

#### F. Some Interesting People Small Group Leaders Lead

- The dominator
- The story-teller
- The passive member
- The joker or clown
- The fighter/defender
- The don

#### G. Is God Calling You?

If you feel inadequate and don't see yourself as a leader, but:

- you like what you've heard
- you really want to get involved
- you're not satisfied with the status quo
- you would like to give it your best even though you don't know how to start...

Chances Are He's Calling YOU

#### H. What Next?

- Meet with friends to pray and discuss the future
- If you would like a taste of small group life, talk to the church pastor or small groups co-ordinator
- Do it! Join a group or begin to build a new one together

## Session Seven

# Developing a Small Groups Network

### A. The Need for a Strategy!

### B. Getting Started

1. Study and understand small group ministry
2. Pray, and follow as God leads
3. Share the vision with others
4. Designate a small group co-ordinator
5. Identify leadership teams, each consisting of:
  - Leader
  - Apprentice leader
  - Host or hostess

Begin training

### 6. Start small

"Grow don't - don't \_\_\_\_\_ into groups

Form a PROTOTYPE group:

- to train
- to bond
- to develop a reproducible model
- to provide an authentic small group experience
- to practice the real thing!

7. Build core groups by adding \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ other church members
8. Build complete groups by adding \_\_\_\_\_ non-members
  - Pray that God will guide you to the other Christians or non-Christians He wants in the group Take other group members to Bible study contacts
  - Offer something of shared interest in group meetings, e.g. parenting, stress
  - Introduce friends socially to group members, e.g. anniversary, concert, birthday, barbecue, etc.
  - Use a course to introduce Christian beliefs like “Alpha”
  - Other ideas? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - Go ahead - invite them to the group!
9. Make sure one or two people don't wear all the \_\_\_\_\_
  - Identify \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_ responsibilities
10. Keep the small group at the level of a \_\_\_\_\_ Christian community
11. Keep the vision clear by reading, prayer, observation evaluation, and training
12. Plan ahead: have a strategy for growth

### C. Supplementary Material

- The Original Cell Model (Korea)
- The “Touch” Model
- The G12 Groups of Twelve (Turbo) Model
  - Everyone is a potential group leader
  - Everyone is ministered to then ministers
  - Everyone can disciple 12 others
  - A believer can only be part of your 12 when they open a cell
  - Everyone should win souls and develop leaders
  - Homogeneous cells grow more rapidly

# Session Eight

## Maintaining the Small Groups Network

It's one thing to start...it's another thing to continue

### A. Small Groups As Living Things

How can we keep them growing?

- The parable of the sower - Mark 4:26-29

#### 1. Understand the “\_\_\_\_\_” principle

- Growth takes place without apparent cause, it is \_\_\_\_\_
- There is order and process in this growth
- All we can do is prepare the way and remove the obstacles to growth
- Matthew 6:27 \_\_\_\_\_ does not make it happen!
- The life is in the seed. We must learn to release the natural growth potential
- This principle applies also to the growth of the kingdom in our lives and in the church

#### 2. Focus on Health

- 8 characteristics of healthy churches (Schwartz)

<u>The Quality</u>	<u>The Function/Concern</u>
I. _____	Leadership
II. _____	Ministry
III. _____	Spirituality
IV. _____	Structures
V. _____	Worship
VI. _____	Small groups
VII. _____	Evangelism
VIII. _____	Relationships

#### 3. Multiply leaders - the key to reproducing groups

- Every person a leader

- Leadership development a priority of Jesus
- Need for training and nurture of leaders

#### 4. Keep it challenging

- Re-define and re-state the vision:
  - The pastor's role
  - The cell supervisors' role
  - The cell leaders' role

#### 5. Keep it interesting

- Be creative

Brainstorm with two or three others: list as many different "surprises" you could suggest for a group activity in three minutes

- Provide variety
- Have fun on the journey

#### 6. Be prepared to take difficult decisions

- Confront difficult people
- Close or re-form dysfunctional groups
- Learn from mistakes: failure is part of success

#### B. Small Groups on Fire - with No Burnout!

- I Thessalonians 5:19
- Ephesians 4:29-32

1. Check the Core Values
2. Understand the change process
3. Watch for Signs of Overload
4. Keep an Eye on the Family
5. Give Prayer Priority
6. Believe the Promise