

Small Group Growth & Multiplication

1. **Multiplying small groups is Hard.** What makes multiplication of existing groups challenging?

- It can **disrupt relationships** that have been developed over time. It takes time and effort to develop trusted relationships through which ministry can happen.
- Thought of Splitting up or changing something that seems to be so good, beneficial is hard. You can and will lose certain group dynamics. Not every group experience will be the same. There are different seasons in small group ministry.
- **Change is challenging.** No one really likes change. (That is why many churches die before they change).
- The **Availability of new leaders** and Host Homes. Multiplying small group ministry requires a lot of leaders and leadership development, which is not always easy to find.

2. **So Why do we need to Multiply?**

- **Experience** shows that for the most part a group of 8-12 is the ideal size of a small group. When it gets bigger you begin lose participation and intimacy, small group members begin to pull back, fall through the cracks and not be cared for.
- **Stagnation** that happens when a group becomes self seeking, self focused, separated from those outside. New members or the intention of growth and multiplication can bring life, focus and vision to a group. God gave us community for a reason that transcends the “little corner of heaven” created in group life. If your group does not harness the power of biblical community to build the kingdom with new believers and new leaders, it will slowly die.
- **More people need what you have.** Every believer needs to be connected to the body, to experience becoming known and knowing others, being cared for, and growing spiritually. Biblical community is not ordinary, its extraordinary! People need it! The goal is to create a culture in the whole church of biblical fellowship.
- **Living things grow.** Things that don't grow, die. Churches are living things! The Church should NEVER live to stop growing! Small groups are the church, like the cells of the body. Our mission is to lead people into a growing relationship with Jesus Christ. We believe that life change happens best in the context of small groups. We need more small groups!
- **The Biblical example and mandate** – Moses & Joshua, Elijah & Elisha, Jesus and His disciples. Paul. 2 Timothy 2:1-2; Ephesians 4:11-13. The goal of every good biblical leader is to replace yourself. Success is not merely doing ministry. but handing off the ministry and the responsibility for it to those behind us.
- **Leadership development.** Small group multiplication provides a great opportunity and tool to develop leaders and shepherds in the body of Christ.

3. How do we Multiply Small Groups?

- **Prepare you group!** The goal and reality of multiplication must be understood and the vision explained from the beginning. It is in our small group covenant. The Leader needs to express it from time to time. Every small group needs to be praying and thinking for growth and multiplication.
- **Understand what season your group is in.** Are you just starting? Getting established? Open verses closed. Close to death. Consider the time of the year (Sept – Jan getting established/Launch new group; Jan – May growing & developing apprentice; May – August – preparing for multiplication)
- **Identify and Develop an apprentice leader.** Every group leader should be identifying possible new small group leaders and have a designated apprentice who is being trained and mentored. Start by **praying!** Ask for God's help and leading. Talk to your small group Ministry leader or Pastor. Approach a potential apprentice, share with them the vision and purpose of small group ministry. Allow the apprentice to try leading aspects of the small group. Mentor the apprentice through it. Show them how you prepare a study, or a small group night. Take them to visit a small group member. Meet with them before the small group meeting to pray for your members.
- **Small Group apprentice training.** The small group ministry team will work to also help train an apprentice when the time is right. One on one training and small group leaders training. Feel free to invite potential small group apprentices to small group leader training meetings.
- **When the time is right,** introduce the start of the multiplication process. **Establish the new small group leader. Set a date** (I recommend Start of new ministry year in September). Decide whether the new or established small group leader will stay with the established group. Allow **small group members** to begin to pray and consider whether they will stay with the existing group or go with the new one.
- **Celebrate.** Before the launch of the new small group, take time to celebrate. Have a party. Pray for the new and old group.

The Qualities of a Small Group Apprentice & Leader:

Commitment, Character, Competence, Chemistry, Connected

2 Timothy 2:2; 1 Timothy 3:1-7

- **Faithfulness** – consistent, reliable, trustworthy, believing,
- **Blameless** – nothing in life that they could be condemned of
- **Faithful to their family**
- **Self controlled** – temperate, safe, sound, not greedy, gentle
- **Respectable** – modest, good behaviour,
- **Hospitable** – good to others, generous, friendly, caring, gentle, relational
- **Able to teach** – fairly good knowledge of what they believe, express it well, not quarrelsome, teachable
- **Spiritual Maturity** – not a new believer, humble, dependant on God.

The Apprenticeship Process

We divide this process into three phases: **observation, preparation, and multiplication**. These phases and key steps within each phase are identified below.

Phase 1: *Observation*

During the observation phase, much of your focus will be on creating an environment where your group members experience authentic community. But you will also want to be intentional about observing your group members with an eye for identifying your apprentice.

How do I identify my apprentice?

In looking for a potential apprentice, it is important to remember that you are not looking for someone who can lead a group tomorrow. You are looking for a teachable group member who has the potential to be a great group leader in the future. We have identified five C's that will assist you in prayerfully considering who in your group may be a good apprentice leader. Commitment, Character, Competence, Chemistry, Connected.

Commitment

- Is potential apprentice committed to your current group? Are they faithful? Are they involved? Do they have the commitment that will be required to be a small group leader?

Character

- First and foremost, it is important to determine if your potential apprentice has established a personal relationship with Christ. Can your potential apprentice point to a time when he or she established a relationship with Christ, and has he or she been growing in a relationship with Christ for over two years?
- Recognizing that character is what makes a leader worth following, is your potential apprentice someone worth following?
- Are you comfortable with your potential apprentice's moral authority to model for other group members what it looks like to be in a growing relationship with Christ?

Competence

- Is your potential apprentice someone who is teachable and able to learn the skills necessary to lead a group? Does your potential apprentice have the relational skills to effectively lead a group at some point in the future?
- create a predictable environment where authentic community and spiritual growth can occur?
- Have you seen your potential apprentice display leadership skills (i.e., facilitating group discussions, planning socials, providing care, etc.) in your group?

Chemistry

- your potential apprentice have the relational skills to effectively lead a group at some point in the future?

- Do they relate well with a variety of types in your group. Are they kind, caring, gentle, compassionate,
- Have you been able to connect relationally with your potential apprentice?
- Have you seen your potential apprentice connect with the other members of your group?
- Are you comfortable with your potential apprentice's ability to relate to others?

Connected

- Is your potential apprentice a regular attender of our church?
- Is your potential apprentice committed to the mission and strategy of our church?

How do I develop my apprentice?

Once you have identified your apprentices, consider some "best practices" that can help you develop them effectively. If apprenticing is a key element of our multiplication and leader development models, then it follows that we should take a strategic approach to apprentice development. Specifically, we will look at four practices:

- Recruiting
- Modeling
- Involving
- Connecting

We acknowledge that no two apprenticeships will look exactly the same because of the uniqueness of the personalities involved. There is no magic formula for developing your apprentice, and naturally you will want to tailor your approach to fit your personality and that of your apprentice, but the tips and strategies that follow can guide you through the process.

Phase 2: *Preparation*

Most of the development your apprentice will receive during the group life cycle will happen during the preparation phase. While you should be modeling group leadership and involving others in the group throughout the group's life, during the preparation phase you will shift your focus to specifically involving your apprentice and intentionally modeling specific attitudes and skills. This shift in focus begins with recruiting your apprentice.

Recruiting

How is recruiting part of development? Doesn't the development process begin after you have identified and recruited your apprentice? On the contrary, how you recruit your apprentice sets the tone for the rest of the development period.

Why did Matthew follow Jesus? Because Jesus invited him. Jesus didn't ask for volunteers to be his disciples—he picked them. He made a general call for people to believe in and follow him, but he handpicked his successors.

The act of inviting people to leadership—if done well—can communicate that they are valued and respected, a message that creates a solid foundation for their development. Consider the following invitations to leadership:

"The Groups Director at North Point said I needed to have an apprentice, so I put your name down. You'd be kind of like the assistant group leader. Whaddya think?"

Versus:

"We've talked about this group multiplying into two new groups next spring. As I think about that, I can really see you leading one of those groups; you really 'get' what groups are about, and I think you bring a lot to the table. So I'd like you to consider being the apprentice leader for the duration of this group, to prepare you to lead your next group."

The invitation is also your first big opportunity to cast vision for what apprenticing and group leadership are all about. Share the passion you have for your role and why you do what you do. Share with them why you think their gifts are well suited to the role. Most potential apprentices are going to have some reservations about becoming group leaders; chances are they don't feel qualified to lead a group. Your invitation is an opportunity to address their concerns, while also building them up, and it also provides a natural segue into communicating the expectations for both group leaders and apprentices.

To a large degree, their understanding of what group leaders are supposed to be is governed by what they see you doing. If the two of you are gifted in different ways, and they don't feel like they would be good at the things they see you do well, they may not think they're well suited for group leadership. This gives you a great opportunity to discuss what a group leader is and is not. Once they understand the role, they may still be a little bit overwhelmed, but at least they will know what is expected of them.

Now, if you have taken this strategic view of recruitment, you will have begun the development process by:

- Affirming their value and leadership skills;
- Casting vision for both the group leader and apprentice roles; and
- Communicating what is expected of them as apprentices.

And if they have accepted your invitation to leadership, they will be ready to embrace the rest of the development process.

Modeling

The apprentice's understanding of what group leadership is all about is based largely on what the apprentice sees the leader doing. This dynamic can be leveraged to build your apprentice's group leadership skills if you are strategic and intentional about the way you lead. There are two critical elements to strategic modeling: demonstration and explanation.

Demonstration is fairly straightforward; it's simply showing them how to lead by watching you. Everything you do as a group leader—the way you lead discussions, how you demonstrate authenticity, how often you interact with group members outside the group meeting—communicates a lesson about group leadership. The key to effective demonstration is to think through what lesson you want to communicate and act accordingly. For example, it may be your natural tendency to allow the discussion time to run long; but since you want to demonstrate the value of adhering to the guidelines in the Covenant, you make a conscious effort to wrap up the discussion at 8:45, even though there are four discussion questions you didn't get to ask.

Explanation involves directly communicating with your apprentice about the principle that you are modeling. For example, if you want to model a sensitive response to tough questions, you may want to say to your apprentice, "Tomorrow night's discussion is probably going to provoke some emotional response from Kelly, since she recently lost her stepmom who wasn't a Christian. I'd like you to listen to how I respond to her comments and questions, and you and I can talk later about why I responded like I did." This helps the apprentice pay particular attention not only to what you do, but also to your method or approach, and it allows you to focus attention on the specific skill or principle that you are modeling. And by making it a priority to talk about what was or will be modeled, you create opportunities for the apprentice to ask questions or provide feedback.

In order to put the demonstration/explanation strategy into practice, you'll need to know what it is you want to model. One way to do this is to periodically spend some time focusing on self-assessment. Ask yourself what you have learned about group leadership that would be helpful to your apprentice and how you might model that. Some group leadership practices you may want to model are:

- **Facilitating discussion** — in particular, how to listen more than you talk; how to engage the introverts or rein in the dominant personalities.
- **Investing in group members** — spend extra relational time with your apprentices and pray both with them and for them.
- **Choosing an apprentice** — ask them whom in the group they would ask to apprentice.

Involving

Simply modeling—even intentional, strategic modeling—is not enough to prepare your apprentices for group leadership. In order to build both their competence and their confidence, they will need to practice leading a group. They will need opportunities to put into practice what they have learned through your modeling. And the best way to prepare them is to actively involve them in the leadership of your group. Here are some time-tested tips for involving your apprentices:

- **Start small** — The life cycles of most groups provide numerous opportunities for your apprentices to take on leadership responsibilities. You can start by asking them to take the lead of a specific area or project, such as: planning a social, leading a discussion, or leading the men or women through their gender's prayer time.
- **Build up** — As they show they're ready, invite them to play an increased role in leading the group. You might give them the chance to run the entire group meeting instead of just one part. Present them with the opportunity to direct the group through a key discussion or transition, such as reviewing the group Covenant, selecting the next curriculum, or discussing next steps toward group multiplication. Involve them in major decisions or conflict resolution, as appropriate.
- **Provide and invite feedback** — As they take on responsibility, give them feedback on how they're doing (make sure that you give them more affirmation than criticism). Just as important, invite them to give you feedback. Ask them how you did; what went well, and how you could have done it better.
- **Encourage training** — Make sure your apprentices are invited to training events and encourage them to attend with you.

For many group leaders, involving their apprentices is the most challenging part of the apprenticing process, because they feel a tremendous sense of ownership of and responsibility for their groups, and they are hesitant to entrust that responsibility to someone else. The key is to remember that success is not just a job well done or more people under your care; success is another competent leader who is ready to take your place.

Phase 3: *Multiplication*

The final phase of the apprenticeship process is the multiplication phase. The last third of the group life cycle is a significant time in the life of your group because successful multiplication requires some advanced planning and intentionality. It's particularly significant for your apprentices because that's the time when the idea of leading their next group begins to solidify in their minds. Since planning for multiplication means planning for two or more future groups, your apprentices will need to be on board and intimately involved with that planning.

Finally, as your group moves into the final third of its life and your multiplication date approaches, follow up with both your director and your apprentice. Confirm that he is taking the necessary steps to move the apprentice toward group leadership and ask if there's any way you can help.

By making a commitment to identifying and developing an apprentice—in effect, replacing yourself—you are playing a significant part in raising up the next generation of leaders and ensuring that there will always be a place for those who want to connect in a community.