

Educational Ministry of the Church
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The Progress of Salvation

We have been saved ...	We are being saved ...	We will be saved ...
... from the <i>penalty</i> of sin.	... from the <i>power</i> of sin.	... from the <i>presence</i> of sin.
Instantaneous salvation of the <i>spirit</i>	Ongoing salvation of the <i>soul</i>	Instantaneous salvation of the <i>body</i>
1 Peter 1:3	1 Peter 1:6-9	1 Peter 1:4-5
Romans 5	Romans 6-7 Romans 12-16	Romans 8
Ephesians 2:1-9	Philippians 2:12-13 Ephesians 2:10	Colossians 3:1-4 Romans 13:11
1 John 3:1	1 John 3:3, 10	1 John 3:2
Titus 2:11	Titus 2:12, 14	Titus 2:13
Faith	Love	Hope
Justification	Sanctification & Vocation	Glorification
SET APART FROM SIN; SET APART TO AND FOR GOD.		

Small/House Groups Training (8/1/08)

Dr. Ron Pyle

Intro/orientation

A theology of Small/House groups

What it means to do a theology of something?

A theology of small groups must start **with God**: from Darin Kennedy (Restoration Quarterly 38:3).

“A theological basis for community will take into account the biblical story. Any basis for community must begin with God”. A theology of community is woven through the grand narrative of creation, fall, and redemption. Before time began, God existed as trinity in community. God created male and female in community, who would increase their community through children. As people made in the image of a communal God, we are made for community. From the beginning humans have often chosen to rebel and resist intimacy with god and each other. When we break communal bonds, dysfunction and death result. In grace and in an attempt to restore relationship, God established community with Israel. Later, God redefined that community through Jesus Christ to accept the entire world and all peoples. In Jesus, God makes the ultimate move of reconciliation. If we choose to embrace God’s invitation to communal intimacy, we can live into some measure of God’s created order. God will someday bring together his entire community which spans both distance and time, and he will establish a new Jerusalem for his people to dwell. In essence, God is the author and perfecter of community. He establishes its boundaries, its identity, its membership, and its future.”

So, why have small groups?

1) Because God, the creator of community, calls us to participate in the community God has already begun. Scripture promises in Matthew 18:20, “For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.” Our participation in God’s communal life is not simply for our own blessing. Ultimately, smaller groups are called out from the larger church to be a blessing to the church.

2) In addition to the foundational, theological reasons to have groups, there are other good practical reasons

Social needs (belonging, inclusion)

Psychological needs (self understanding),

Physical needs (relational health is related to physical health via hypertension, stroke, heart attack etc),

Extending ministry - groups provide flexible, mobile, lay-led opportunities to minister to others.

What is a small/house group?

“A small group within the church is a voluntary, intentional gathering of 3 – 12 people regularly meeting together with the shared goal of mutual Christian edification and fellowship.”

McBride, p. 12

Within the Church – part of something bigger than ourselves. Under the direction of the Holy Spirit, embracing biblical standards and values. A purpose larger than our small gathering

Voluntary -

Intentional gathering – has clear purpose and design. Groups become groups by and intentional process

3 – 12 people – Less than three is not a group, more than 12 makes some aspects of interpersonal relationship difficult. Larger groups could be divided into smaller groups.

Regular meetings

Shared goal

Mutuality – every member assumes responsibility for group functioning and is accountable to relationships with the other members

Christian Edification – To build up the members and the larger church.

Fellowship – sharing things in common based on mutual relationship through Christ.

7 Keys to Healthy Small Groups (from Roberta Hestenes)

1. Covenant

2. Helpful leadership

3. Caring.

4. Content.

5. Communication.

6. Conflict

7. Jesus Christ.

Of all of the aspects of healthy group life we are going to focus on three: 1) beginning groups including establishing covenants, 2) providing leadership to groups, and 3) managing group conflict.

Beginning groups

A General Sequence for Starting Small Groups

The following steps are taken by a leadership nucleus that involves a leader, apprentice, host, and possibly an assistant.

1. Prayer – check your heart and motives
2. Meet first to develop spiritual community
3. Pray and establish possible group purpose
4. Consult church leaders for ideas and resources
5. Pray, plan, re-define group purpose
6. Pray; create a list of potential members
7. Pray and decide on a time and place for the first meeting; allow at least two weeks to invite
8. Pray and give a warm, positive, enthusiastic **personal** invitation

The First Meeting Few Meetings

1. Pray
2. Consider the physical, and social environment
3. Build relationships

4. Covenanting

- a. Aspects: purpose, building relationships, scripture, prayer, intensity, leadership
- b. Group commitments: attendance, confidentiality, honesty, accountability, advice-giving, outside activities

5. Set productive patterns of behavior during the first meetings

6. Pray for group members (present and absent), contact the absent

Covenanting

Key Aspects of Group Life to be Considered in Covenanting:

Time:

- How frequently do we meet?
- How long is each meeting?
- For how long is this group meeting?

Type of Group:

Relationship

Content

Task

Need

Combination

Membership:

Open or closed?

Mixed sex or same sex?

Relationships:

How will the group build relationships among members?

Scripture:

How will the group use the Bible in their life together?

Prayer:

What part will prayer occupy in the group?

Intensity:

What level of commitment and work do we want in the group? How hard do we want to work?

Leadership:

What pattern of leadership do we want?

Who is willing to take responsibility to help the group achieve its goals?

Some of the questions that may be helpful to discuss when contracting with your group include:

Why do we want to have a small group?

What do you personally want to get out of this group?

What goals do we want to adopt as a small group?

What ingredients do we want included in our group?

What **don't** we want to do in this group?

What will make this group “successful” or worth the time involved?

Leadership

- *Defining leadership: “The process of building commitment to the organization’s objectives and empowering followers to accomplish these objectives.”*
– Gary Yukl, in Bill Robinson’s Leading People from the Middle

Realities of Leadership:

- *Leadership is a communication process*
– Leadership must be earned and given (vs. positional and demanded)
- *Leadership involves interpersonal power*

- *Leadership implies change*
- *Leaders tend to cast “shadows” or “light” (Parker Palmer)*
- *Leaders tend to deform or reform the persons and organizations they influence*
- *Leadership demands effort and time*
- *Can be a ministry of service*

Realities of leadership continued

- *Leaders must reconcile group goals and individual member goals*
- *Leaders must manage the dynamic between relational and task needs*
- *Even good leaders will not make every group successful*
- *Each leadership task is different; leaders must be flexible*

Internal Obstacles to Effective Leadership

- *Lack of humility*
- *Fear of failure*
- *Discouragement*
- *Inattention to one’s own spiritual life*

External Obstacles to Effective Leadership

- *Poor time management*
- *Inability to deal with relational conflict*
- *Overload and burnout*
- *Poor communication management (esp. domination)*

How Do Leaders Become Leaders?

- *Appointed*
- *Elected*
- *Emerge from group communication*
- *Personality*
- *Circumstances*
- *Style*
- *Service*

Self-righteous service vs. True service

Minimal Leadership Tasks

- *Pray*
 - Specific
 - Personal
 - Before, during, and after meetings

Prepare

- Environment
- Resources
- Plan for meeting
- Questions
- *Guide*
 - Use of time
 - Flow of discussion
 - Interpersonal communication
- *Care*
 - Ignored members
 - Attacked members
 - Hurting members
 - Follow-up after and between meetings

Leading Discussion

Why have a discussion?

- *Find out what others are thinking*
- *Increase involvement*
- *Arrive at a conclusion or solution*

Some Principles in Leading Discussion

- *Avoid loaded questions with right answers*
- *Make them the experts*
- *Don't judge*
- *Don't preach*
- *Be fully present, verbally and nonverbally*
- *Plan potential questions ahead of time*
- *Use clarifying questions and paraphrasing when your understanding is lacking*
- *Redirect questions from the leader toward the group members*
- *Once you are sure a question is clear, be patient with silence*
 - Don't answer your own question

Equalizing Participation

- *Reaffirm the covenant*
- *Offer the quiet person a special assignment*

- *Listen well and affirm the contribution of quieter members*
- *Consider other modes of communication*
 - Have members write
 - Have members discuss with a partner
- *Use seating*
- *Get the talkative to help you include others*
- *Gently confront the dominant in private*
- *Use formative evaluation to initiate conversation*

Group Experience

- *Suppose you are preparing to lead a discussion with a house group. The topic of the discussion is encounter between Jesus and the Samaritan woman (John 4: 1-26)*
- *As a group, write three good discussion questions*

Interpersonal Conflict in Ministry Contexts

A Definition of Interpersonal Conflict (Hocker and Wilmot)

- *An expressed struggle*
- *Between at least two interdependent parties*
- *Who perceive incompatible goals*
- *Scarce rewards*
- *And interference from the other party*

Five Mistaken Ideas About Conflict

- *Conflict can always be avoided*
- *Conflict always damages relationships*
- *Conflict always occurs because of misunderstanding*
- *Conflict is always the sign of a poor relationship*
- *Conflict can always be resolved*

Type #1: Substantive Conflict

- *Disagreement about members' ideas and group issues*
- *Example: Disagreement about the interpretation of a bible passage*

Type #2: Procedural Conflict

- *Disagreement about the methods or process the group should follow in attempting to reach group goals*
- *Example: Will we use **rotating leadership** or a **single constant leader**?*

Type #3: Affective Conflict

- *Conflicts around personalities, communication styles, and emotions of group members*
- *Example: Certain members feel devalued or ignored*

The Unique Nature of Conflict in Ministry Groups

- *A group of individuals with diverse needs and expectations*
- *Personal and passionate concerns*
- *Spiritualized conflict*

Common Sources of Conflict in Ministry Groups

- *The fall has produced imperfect people*
- *Clusters of fear*
- *Unclear mission and vision*
- *Unclear roles and responsibilities*
- *Communication lines are blocked*
- *Leadership styles clash with group*
- *Lack of ownership produces withdrawal*

Interpersonal Power in Conflict

- *Power is possessing something that someone else values and/or needs to achieve their goals*

Some Types of Power Currencies (R-I-C-E)

- *Resource control*
- *Interpersonal linkages*
- *Communication skills*
- *Expertise*

Misconceptions About Power

- *Power is a fixed trait that some possess*
 - The myth of “power over” vs. “power with”
- *All power is finite*
- *Power is inherently good (bad)*

Conflict Management in groups -

Some Conflict Management Skills

- *Follow Biblical mandates*
 - Matt. 18:15-17; Matt. 5:23,24; 1 Cor. 6:1-8
- *Seek consensus on the basics – begin with agreement (affirm hope)*
- *Watch your attitude toward self, others, and conflict*
 - Conflict is normal
 - Be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to become angry– James 1: 19
- *Educate groups and model healthy conflict management*
- *Intervene early*
- *Establish supportive vs. defensive environments (Jack Gibb)*

Defensive

Supportive

Evaluation	Description
Agenda	Needs
Strategy	Spontaneity
Neutrality	Empathy
Superiority	Equality
Closed	Open

- *Distinguish triggers from the causes of conflict*
- *Defuse yourself, the other, and the situation*

- *Don't let the sun go down on your anger – Ephesians 4:26*
- *Agree to Disagree*

Citations:

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