

Fresh Insight

for holistic small group ministries

Q & A with Lee Brockington, Founding Pastor, LifeChurch, Katy, Texas

You planted Lifechurch 8 years ago. If you could have done anything differently, what would it be?

We spent four months before we launched to instill the vision and values of who we were before we planted the church. Although I think that was needed, we were not quite prepared to equip our launch team to be effective cell *leaders*. To be specific, we equipped them to understand and embrace the values of cell life as members, but we did not equip them to be effective servant leaders.

If I had it all to do over again, I would have invested a *minimum* of 6 months to instill the vision and values of cell life (member level stuff). Then, I would have developed these future leaders with a deeply relational process of discipleship for another six months (beyond the use of a group leader training resource). Developing a culture of disciple-making is paramount to success in any cell-based church transition or plant.

What advice would you give a pastor launching groups so he'll get it right the first time and see conversion growth and personal transformation in his church's first groups?

Here's my top ten pieces of advice for any church planter or pastor who wants to start a transition:

1. This might sound like a no-brainer, but any vision must be birthed out of a love for God and a servant-hearted love for people.
2. The vision for fulfilling the local church's mission through groups must come from the lead pastor.
3. The lead pastor must find every opportunity to instill these principles into the hearts of the people from his personal and ongoing experiences in group life through each kind of communication to the church body.
4. The vision must not be just another "grow quick, close the back door, or create relationships scheme." The pastor must fully be devoted to owning the process for himself, believing that it is a Biblical model for effectively equipping and releasing believers for the work of their ministry.
5. There must be a transition in values in the member's lives before groups are launched so they succeed.
6. Take the time to develop a thorough, deeply relational equipping process for leaders. Not a weekend class, but a process of developing healthy servant leaders through an ongoing relationship.
7. Do not compromise the values and vision. Require that all future leaders fulfill the relational equipping process. Do not short cut it for anyone, even deacons or elders or those with previous experience.
8. Make sure that the individual believers coming into the first groups understand that it is their responsibility to evangelize. The first groups must be intentionally outreach driven. Equip the members with the skills to reach out and practically implement tangible outreaches for the groups.
9. Equip and release ministry to people using Jesus as a model. He raised up disciples and then released them into ministry. True Biblical leaders cannot hold on to leadership. Effective Biblical leaders pour into others and release leadership and ministry to them. In the book, *Leadership Is An Art*, Max Dupree said, "Succession is one of the key responsibilities of leadership". In other words, raise up a people that can do ministry as well and even *better* than you! Biblical leadership is giving away what you have been given (II Timothy 2:2). Effective leadership is multiplying yourself through a deeply relational process of impartation.

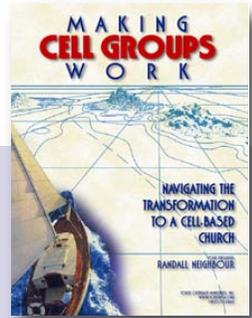


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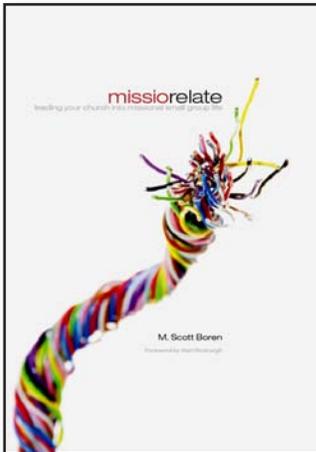
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10. I end as I began: loving God requires loving people. Any vision must be wholeheartedly about edifying and equipping God's people, not lording over them or controlling them. God's vision is about building God's people for His glory.

You've planted a couple of cell churches. What's next?

After nine wonderful years of pastoring a truly awesome church here in Katy, Texas, the Lord has called my family to head to the mission field and to give away what God has poured into us. We are in the process of moving to Belmopan, Belize, to plant a cell church in the capital city. Our sole purpose is to raise up teams to go and plant other cell churches throughout Belize. You can learn more about what we are doing at www.lifebelize.com.

How can folks reading this become a part of the work in Belize?

First and foremost, pray for us! Partner with us by interceding for us on a daily basis. We have a monthly newsletter to help with this.

Second, pray about partnering financially with us. We are seeking 55 churches or individuals who will partner with us \$100 a month. We are believing for 2-4 anchor churches that will partner with us \$500 - \$1000 a month. (Some may only be able to do \$25 a month, which would be great as well...any amount given will be a huge blessing!)

Lee has written articles for TOUCH that blessed many, helped me train pastors who journey to Houston to learn about cell group ministry, and shown us that a cell-based church will work in America! Take a moment right now to check out his web site and support him with prayer and some of your personal or church's missions offerings. This is a great kingdom investment!
www.lifebelize.com

The Church Case Study (Part 2 of 3)

by Randall Neighbour

[In the last issue, I discussed a church I consulted at the beginning of the summer. Today they face three challenges: discipleship; launching new groups that are far healthier than the existing groups; and moving the staff and congregation deeper into a decentralized model of missional church life. In case you didn't read that first article on introducing discipleship through a concentrated effort to reach friends for Christ, I encourage you to read it [here](#).]

And now for something completely different...

This church's existing groups have been together for two years or more. They were not planted with members who truly understood these groups were a "grow up and move out of the house" kind of experience. The group members were also introduced to relational discipleship late in the game, *after* groups were formed. Launching groups without these two values produced fellowship, Bible study, and some servanthood, but it didn't produce enough personal transformation that resulted in members desiring to lead new groups. For this church, the best way out of this is to launch a few new groups that at their very core are dynamically different. Then, over the course of time, cherry pick members from the old groups to put into the new healthy groups as they flourish.

My recommendation was to invite couples, families, and single people from the most established (and too large) groups to form new groups under the care of the lead or a staff pastor. The invitation was to be extended carefully to those who would be willing to commit the time, energy, and desire to reach friends for Christ and disciple them. In order for this to work, the incoming members of the new group must understand it will be a completely different kind of small group experience—one requiring a much deeper level of commitment to God, one another, and the unchurched people all around them.

I have found that in a church with 6-8 large, established groups or more, there are typically enough frustrated believers who are serious about being the church and are ready to break away. By sharing a vision for a new group whose activities will focus on outreach, discipleship, and new group formation within a calendar year or less, not everyone will commit. But those who do will be ready for a challenge and the pastors of this church can launch healthy groups and transition a sluggish small group ministry into a healthy one.

If your groups are not producing fruit, step up to the plate and show the small group leaders and members of your church how it's done. You probably did this years ago, but folks forget the mission of small groups all too quickly. It's time to model it again!

Randall Neighbour is an author and the President of TOUCH Outreach Ministries. He serves as a coach for pastors who want to grow missionally through holistic small groups or cell groups. If you need a knowledgeable, outside source of encouragement to develop healthy groups in your church, give him a call at 800-735-5865.

