

# Fresh Insight

## for cell group ministry

### Will Cells Heal Your Church?

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For the month of January, I posted a Quick Survey question to the front page of our web site. I posed the question: "Do you think cell groups will make your church healthy?"

91% of those who responded said "yes". This is disturbing to say the least!

Many are confusing the wine with the wineskin. If a church's members do not love one another sacrificially and are not making new disciples, implementing cell groups isn't going to help. In fact, implementing any new structure in an unhealthy church should be approached with great caution because the change could do more damage than good.

If you launch cell groups with healthy people, the transition will gain momentum and the participants will get excited about the new structure and all but forget the old. If launched rapidly with unhealthy people, those in the groups will resist or do what they've always done in a cell group, which is not much except showing up to the weekly meeting.

Years ago, I was a part of a church in the midst of a transition to cells. The pastor was fully on board and driving the shift to cells. The church had grown the cell ministry to 13 groups, but these groups were not seeing the evangelism and one-anothering that went on in the first and second generation prototype groups.

As the second generation groups multiplied and assimilated members into the cell group structure, the groups suffered from stagnation and

eventually died off to three struggling groups.

The transition was launched with the tiny, energetic and evangelistic part of the church—the small minority or healthy part of the congregation. While this was an excellent strategy, the leadership assumed the rest of the church would follow suit as they joined a cell group and began to live like the healthy Christians. This church had no strategy for moving the next batch of potential cell members into the same lifestyle of servanthood and evangelism before assimilating them into new cell groups.

Through this three-year process, they realized that most of the church members were not healthy believers. They were faithful Sunday attendees and tithers, but they led very private lives and were not interested in changing their value system from that of the

world to what God has called His church to be.

Only the healthy part of your church will enjoy cell life and see it produce fruit. If your church is not experiencing any measurable growth today (i.e. only baptizing children of members and seeing little meaningful interaction between members during the week), launching a cell

ministry may just hurt your church because there's not enough widespread church health to support a complete new wineskin change in six months to a year.

If what I just described characterizes your church, the place to start is discovering the mission God has given

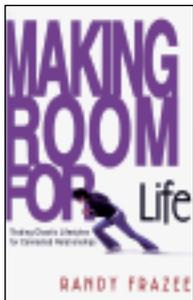
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Do you think cell groups will make your church healthy?

Yes	91%
No	4%
Maybe	5%

Total Votes 104

January 2004



## ***Making Room for Life***

Randy Frazee

Reviewed by: Scott Boren

In his book, *The Connecting Church*, Randy Frazee presented his vision and strategy for

what he calls “place-based” community. In the companion book *Making Room for Life*, he goes beyond the vision and strategy to address lifestyle issues that most Americans embrace which stand against the development of community in small groups. Frazee addresses the practical issues that most church members deal with on a daily basis — issues that may seem unspiritual, but in fact undermine the development of healthy spiritual community. Such issues include time spent in the car commuting, bringing work home, no time for meals at home, and busyness because kids are committed to too many activities. One of the great strengths of this book is that it often provides three options for change: modest change, substantial change, and radical change.

The practical answers provided by a pastor who must wrestle with these issues on a weekly basis alone makes this book worth reading at least once, if not multiple times. This book is radical and counter-cultural. Many will read it and find Frazee’s suggestions unrealistic. Others will embrace the challenge.

I find his insights most helpful and want to share them with others close to me. Because this book emphasizes place-based small groups and some churches organize their groups differently, it may prove confusing to some people because the strategy is different. Yet no matter the specifics of a church’s small group strategy, Frazee’s suggestions will not only help small groups, but they may just bring a lot more balance and personal health to small group leaders and members. ♦



## ***Walking the Small Group Tightrope***

Bill Donahue and Russ Robinson

Reviewed by: Scott Boren

The best place to learn how to lead a small group comes through experience,

mostly from failure. The authors share their experiences of leading small groups and reveal how their failures led them to move beyond the basic small group leadership skills to deal with six challenges that every small group leader faces.

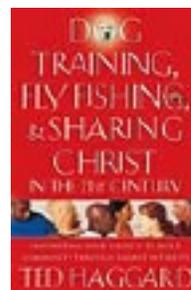
They explain these six challenges by showing how leaders must walk between two polar opposites. These poles are: Truth/Life; Task/People; Care/Discipleship; Friendship/Accountability; Kindness/Confrontation; and Openness/Intimacy.

Donahue and Robinson provide a coherent and trustworthy solution to the challenges presented by these poles. They demonstrate for instance that a group cannot just focus on biblical truth at the expense of sharing life, nor can one just spend all of its time sharing life stories while not dealing with God’s truth. Instead a group should walk the tightrope of tension between truth and life and there find the realm of spiritual transformation. Likewise, for the other five challenges, they provide a middle ground between the two poles.

The book’s greatest benefit is found in the practical ideas for a group to walk the tightrope between each of the six tensions. Such insights should prove most helpful to pastors and small group leaders. It even includes group interaction exercises so that entire groups can work through these six challenges.

The only potential drawback is the fact that the book is written for many different kinds of small groups, including task groups. While there are excellent insights for how to take task groups beyond getting the job

done, cell group leaders might find it confusing because holistic cell groups operate under a more uniform vision. Even still, with some basic explanation, this book can be easily used by cell group churches to help cell groups leaders move beyond basic leadership skills and into deeper levels of ministry. ♦



## ***Dog Training, Fly Fishing & Sharing Christ***

Ted Haggard

Reviewed by:  
Randall Neighbour

As I sat down to read this book, I thought it best to

create a “likes and gripes” list to help track my thoughts. To be candid, the favorable side of the list was short. I liked Haggard’s desire to help his church members reach the lost with their hobbies and interests and his down to earth “view from the pew.”

From what I’ve read and heard the author say firsthand at a conference, the free market small group model was birthed out of an inability by to bring New Life’s membership into true, holistic small group life. As hard as the staff tried, only 20% of New Life’s mostly white collar crowd of upwardly mobile (and highly transient) families wanted cell life. Because of this, New Life designed and launched semester-based small groups that are based on interests or hobbies, thinking that if the interest or hobby had a strong enough desire, people would be drawn to be a part of it.

Anyone is free to start a group after participation in a current group and a four-hour leadership class. One’s only commitment is to a semester of learning or teaching.

Only one of four things are required for the group to be validated ... worship, prayer, Bible Study or a testimony. The bar has intentionally been set very low to increase par-

ticipation. This creates hundreds, if not thousands, of extended relationships with hard-core lost people. But, this is not the same as a holistic small group experience or a cell group whose purpose is to experience the presence, power and purpose of Christ in the midst.

The author's description of a "pure cell church" in chapter thirteen is simply not accurate. He's described the model as if all cell groups within a church are cookie-cutter groups that simply gather to discuss the pastor's sermon each week. He includes no description of the dynamic member-to-member ministry in and out of the meetings that is experienced, nor the natural desire within disciplined members to launch a new group due to an increased understanding of one's own purpose in life.

I know a few churches that have read this book and shifted toward free-market small groups because they simply could not get their membership to move into holistic small groups or cell groups. This is disappointing. I'm not against interest groups that are an evangelistic extension of a cell group. But to have *only* these kinds of groups will not allow members to live in true biblical community. For many, the decision to abandon holistic small groups for an easy-in, easy-out free market system will be a far easier road. The question remains if this model will provide long-term growth and a New Testament lifestyle for the local church. ♦

**How are your cell groups structured?**

5x5 . . . . .	21%
Pure G12 . . . . .	32%
G12.3 . . . . .	11%
Hybrid (G12 & 5x5) . . . . .	9%
Other . . . . .	27%

Total Votes: 81  
Quick Poll from the TOUCH Website  
August 2003

**How many holistic small groups (cells) do you have?**

Less than 10 . . . . .	45%
10-15 . . . . .	17%
16-25 . . . . .	12%
26-50 . . . . .	10%
50-100 . . . . .	8%
100+ . . . . .	9%

Total Votes: 128  
Quick Poll from the TOUCH Website  
September 2003

**How evangelistic are your cell groups?**

Every group is successful . . . . .	6%
Most groups are successful . . . . .	11%
Just a few are successful . . . . .	32%
Our groups are not evangelistic . . . . .	51%

Total Votes: 47  
Quick Poll from the TOUCH Website  
November 2003

*continued from page 1*  
your church. I have visited dozens of churches with mission statements emblazoned on banners and bulletins, but it's just a sentence crafted by a team formed a few years ago. Few members could recite it from memory or tell me with an honest face that they have embraced it as indicated by their day-to-day activities. So a mission statement is not all I'm talking about.

Your mission will define your practices and give you a measuring stick for the actual health of your church. If only 10% of your church is living out the mission, you have 10% health. Focusing your preaching and moving the balance into a missional lifestyle may bring more health, but it's not going to happen overnight, and it won't happen with preaching alone. You'll need to create a process to introduce your church's mission to a few families at a time and help them begin to make the shift toward missional cell life before they are invited to join a group.

The part of your church that is healthy is ready for cell group implementation. If it's a huge portion of your membership, then moving into cell ministry will be easy and faster because the currently-held values of those members will support it. If it's a handful of your members, the missional lifestyle—which should not to be confused with simply joining a cell group—will have to be introduced in such a way as to bring members to a point of repentance . . . or the visible signs of turning away from a sinful lifestyle, walking in a different direction and never looking back.

Repentance is a spiritual value that is hard to understand, let alone adopt. Most believers confuse confes-

sion or forgiveness with repentance, and while both these proceed repentance, they're not the same. Moving your membership into a repentant, new direction where they are sacrificially living out the Great Commandment and Commission is creating true church health.

The church I described above did not move unhealthy, non-missional partitions of church memberships into repentance prior to inviting them to join a cell group. The doors were opened wide for anyone who had interest. What the church should have done is to create a process to take complacent members into a deep understanding of the mission of the church; help them see the contrast between it and their current lifestyle; bring them to a point of confession; and give them an urgent desire to repent, or turn away from the old to the new. The members that made it all the way through this process would have entered cell life with a bright new perspective and desire to lead a missional life along with the other group members.

Ben Wong is the apostolic head of a network of cell-based churches throughout Hong Kong and mainland China. Years ago, he and I were visiting about churches in transition, and in his odd, humorous way, he hit the nail on the head. "A dead church that transitions to cells will become a dead cell church." As you consider or continue to work in your implementation strategy for cell groups, remember that they will not make your church healthy. Cell groups can take missional members to new heights in community-based relationship, ministry and outreach, but they won't do anything for your "sit and soak" Christians. The unhealthy parts of your church need to be brought to a point of confession and repentance before they enter cell life. Then, and only then, will they discover how easy and what a fruitful thing it is to live a missional lifestyle. ♦

*This article was written by Randall Neighbour, President of TOUCH, The Cell Group People.*

# Where Is Your Church In The Journey?

As I sat around a table with church leaders talking about cell groups, one of the leaders asked a revealing question, "What percentage of our people must be in groups for us to be a cell church?" This question uncovered a deeper assumption regarding how he classified churches. He assumed three broad categories of churches: non-cell churches, cell church transitions, and cell churches. And of course cell churches were the ideal in his mind.

Using these three broad categories creates a mindset that churches will "arrive" at some point, that if a church reaches a certain level of cell participation or of cell growth that they have crossed over the great divide and finally entered into the promised land of cell church. It creates a mindset that sees cell groups as a destination rather than a journey.

Such thinking is very dangerous. Rather than seeing churches through the lens of categories of those who have arrived and those who are just in transition, it is much better to see churches, even those who call themselves cell churches, on a journey. No church has arrived at the final destination. There is no ideal church on this side of Christ's return. Instead there are stages on the journey to the development of cell groups. As I have interviewed pastors that have developed cell groups, I've found that those who were the most successful followed a similar journey, one outlined by an eight-stage cell implementation process. In what stage is your church?

## **Stage 1: Discover the Cell Group Vision**

The first stage is summarized in the following statement: "Find out as much as you can about the cell group vision." When I listened to the stories of churches that have developed the most effective cell group systems, all of these churches shared a common element in their journey. They all did their homework. They did not start groups after attending one conference or reading one book. Instead they attended many conferences, devoured

as much literature on cell groups as they could, and they developed relationships with other pastors who have been doing groups for a few years.

## **Stage 2: Develop Vision and Strategy as a Team**

Churches that have made cell groups work have recruited and built a Cell Group Vision Team to lead the church through the process of developing groups. This team is comprised of three to seven people who have a passion for cell groups. It is crucial for the senior pastor to be part of this team and to lead people into the cell group vision. Moving a church toward the cell group destination is such a comprehensive shift for a church that it is impossible for him to delegate leadership of the cell vision to an associate pastor or a volunteer leader.

## **Stage 3: Assess Your Church's Current Reality**

Many church leaders ask, "Will cell groups work in my church?" The answer to this question is found by assessing a church's starting point with respect to the final destination. Some churches are relatively close to making cell groups work. Others are further away. This starting point will be unique for each church. Denominational background, leadership style, history, culture, and socio-economic make-up all contribute to the differences. This does not mean that some churches cannot do cell groups. It only means that the journey for some churches will take longer or go a different route than others.

## **Stage 4: Prepare the Church Through Transformation**

After assessing factors that reveal their church's readiness for cell groups in Stage 3, the vision team and other leaders will work through Stage 4 to improve the areas of weakness that would undermine cell group implementation. Preparation of the church for cell groups occurs on four levels. The first level is the preparation of key leaders who will participate in the first

cell groups. The second level is the preparation of future cell group members. Preparing the crowd (church attenders) for cell group participation happens on a third level. The fourth level focuses on preparing the non-people factors for cell groups: church organization, church polity, staffing structure, etc.

## **Stage 5: Launch the First Group(s) with Kingdom-seekers**

Stage 5 delineates how to launch first groups that are strong. Strong groups are populated with Kingdom-seeking people, those who "seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness." It is tempting to identify Kingdom-seekers and make them leaders straight away. Instead, the best way to start strong groups is to invite them to be the cell group members of the first groups. The goal is to create strong groups that will be able to learn how to participate in a healthy vibrant cell group. The process for getting started with cell groups is called prototyping. Most churches start with one prototype group because they find that they have fewer than 12 Kingdom-seekers in their church. Larger churches will be able to start multiple prototype cells, but they should be conservative so that they can make sure that all of their first groups are strong enough to reproduce new groups that produce the right kind of life.

## **Stage 6: Generate Cell Group Momentum**

Church leaders and the Cell Group Vision Team must work to support the groups properly so that the groups create momentum. It's very easy to develop a cell group program, but the experience of authentic biblical community is a work of the Holy Spirit, the wind of God. A cell group program results in meetings that people feel obligated to attend. Such experiences do not generate momentum; in fact, it depletes it. Authentic biblical community creates an atmosphere where people do not need to be convinced to attend. It propels a church forward; it

spontaneously brings life to the groups; and it creates the word-of-mouth effect among the grass roots. Practical measures for helping to generate momentum include advancing corporate prayer within the church body, promoting relational ministry in every church gathering, training people in relationship evangelism, setting up an equipping (discipleship) track, and developing an effective coaching system.

### Stage 7: Establish the Hidden Systems that Support the Cells

The goal of Stage 7 is to merge all of the necessary elements and align them so as to create critical mass. At critical mass, all of the elements are in place to create a self-sustaining multiplication of forces without help from the outside. A church reaches cell group critical mass when all pieces are in place to produce spontaneous growth and multiplication. In Stage 7, the church will look to develop (in the case of a church plant) or reorganize (in the case of a church transition) the systems needed to support the cell groups properly. Such systems include church administration, pastoral staffing, support staffing, church offices, budgets, retreats, reporting systems, and many other hidden elements needed to support group development.

### Stage 8: Expand the Cell Groups to Reach the Unreached

Large churches that host cell group conferences and share what they are doing are Stage 8 churches. Stage 8 is the point when cell group life becomes exciting, groups grow spontaneously, and people are reached that most likely would never have been reached through traditional evangelistic means. As a church moves through Stages 5, 6, and 7, the evangelistic focus is on relationship evangelism that seeks to reach unchurched family members, friends, co-workers and neighbors. In Stage 8, cell groups must develop ways to penetrate the social circles of the unchurched. The focus then must shift to cell group expansion. Groups



### Turning Members Into Leaders

— Dave Earley

Reviewed by:  
Randall Neighbour

I first read a rough draft of this book when Dave sent the manuscript along to see if we were interested in publishing it. The second time I read it was when the layouts were completed. The third time I read it was when it came in from the printer.

I think this is the only book we've published that I've read this many times. Why? Because it was written for cell leaders in a very practical way and every time I read it, it gets me excited about developing my cell members into leaders. The excitement comes from the way Dave relates to his reader by sharing lots of stories about cell leaders who followed his advice and turned their members into leaders. With each story, he interjects another principle behind making a disciple.

In Dave's first book, he revealed 8 habits a cell leader must develop to be effective. The habits were simple to understand and he provided practical ways to implement these habits. In *Turning Members into Leaders*, Dave is just as practical, but offers 8 "D's" for success. They are as follows:

- *Dream of multiplying leaders.* If you don't have a vision for releasing others to do what you do, it won't happen.
- *Demonstrate multiplying leadership.* Showing your members how to lead effectively, or modeling, is imperative.

must take the life of authentic biblical community to the unreached and not just sit around waiting for nonbelievers to come to them. ♦

(Turn to page 6 to take a quick assessment that will help you identify the current stage of your church's journey.)

- *Discover potential leaders.* Many cell members can lead a group in the future if you learn to see them the way God does.
- *Deepen the relationship.* Investing extra time into leadership-quality members, asking them to work alongside you as a leader will help move them into the position naturally.
- *Describe the dream.* Share your dream of reaching the lost and multiplying the ministry of the group through others. Impart a vision.
- *Determine expectations and commitments.* Together with your interns or apprentices, discuss what you expect from them and help them get it done.
- *Develop the potential leader.* Use on-the-job training, your church's training track, and outside resources to help the new leader succeed.
- *Deploy them into leadership.* When you've effectively set them up for success and planned to send them out, you must practice staying out of their way.

This book will no doubt be a strong seller year after year because it creates an itch within a cell leader and then scratches that itch. It's both practical and vision-casting.

The best way to use this resource will be to give the book to each of your leaders and have their coach work through each chapter with them to insure success.

With all my heart I can say that if your cell leaders will follow what Dave has written in this book, you will see lots of new cell leaders and cell groups in your church! ♦

*This article was written by Scott Boren, Director of Research and Development for TOUCH, The Cell Group People. Many churches who have tried cells in the past and failed are finding that the process Scott has shared here works. If you're not familiar with it, pick up a copy of Making Cell Groups Work.*

# Identifying Your Stage in Transition

[Editor's Note: If you have not read Scott Boren's article on page 4, we encourage you to do so before you take this self-assessment.]

Where are you on the journey? Mark these questions true or false with regard to your church.

T F

- 1. As a church, we are just learning about the cell group vision and have yet to start any groups.
- 2. We are in the process of preparing ourselves as church leaders to make the transition into cell groups, for which we are developing a plan to launch within the next year.
- 3. We have started our first group or groups within the last year.
- 4. We are a part of a young church plant that started with cell groups, but the cell group vision still feels very new to us.
- 5. We have been doing cell groups for more than two years but less than five. We believe in the vision, and we are seeing positive results, but we need to take them to the next level.
- 6. Our church has been doing a form of small groups for a few years. While our old small group strategy was good, we have chosen to embrace the cell group vision and are trying to transform

our current small groups into cell groups.

- 7. We have been doing cell groups for more than five years. They are a stated part of the vision of our church. While we emphasize them, they are not currently growing. We are frustrated and need to figure out the problem.
- 8. Cell groups are growing in our church. We not only believe in the vision, we see it happening. At the same time, there are lingering effects from the traditional church model that seem to impede the cell group progress.
- 9. When people think about our church, they see the cell groups working side by side with the large group celebration. We have been doing groups long enough that we

have discovered what works in our church setting and what does not. We just want to continue learning new ways to do them better.

- 10. Our church has started penetrating unchurched groups through cell group multiplication, church planting, creative evangelistic small groups, missions, and training up new pastors. Our cell groups have become so much a part of the culture of our church that we need not focus on changing the church; instead we are focusing on multiplying what we are doing.

After you have answered these ten questions, see the answer key below to determine your church's current stage in transition. ♦

## Determining Your Church's Stage

The following answer key will help you determine your church's stage:

True Answer	Stage
1	Stage 1: Discover the cell group vision
2	Stage 2: Develop Vision and Strategy as a Team
2	Stage 3: Assess Your Current Reality
2	Stage 4: Prepare the church through Transformation
3,4	Stage 5: Launch the First Groups with Kingdom Seekers
5,6,7	Stage 6: Generate Cell Group Momentum
8,9	Stage 7: Establish the Hidden Systems that Support Cells
10	Stage 8: Expand the Cell Groups to Reach the Unreache

While you will be working in multiple stages at one time, most likely you will have one that should become your place of focus.

For more information on your stage of focus and tools to help you move through that stage, see: *The ABCs of Making Cell Groups Work; Making Cell Groups Work; Navigation Guide for Making Cell Groups Work.*

# Growing a Thriving Small Group System

Why is it so easy to get small groups going, and so hard to keep them healthy and growing? Why do some churches' small groups soar while others sputter and fail?

Over the past twenty-five years I've learned a lot about small group ministry. I have led many groups and served as a small group coach, lead pastor, and small group pastor. I've visited cell-based churches across the country and around the world. For eight years, I was a small group consultant, helping churches of all sizes and backgrounds. I have even done a Ph.D. in organizational communication statistically comparing stagnant and growing small group systems.

However, the most valuable lessons I have gained about creating a growing small system have come from my own experience as a small group pastor in two very different churches. These churches although similar in size and worship style were a study in contrasts when it came to small group ministry.

In Church A, I served as the quarter-time small groups pastor. In the two years before I came on board the home group system had "grown" from 25 groups to 12 groups. The system was in disarray and people were disillusioned with small groups. I began the job with no budget and almost no recognition. (My name never did appear in the listing of pastors in the church bulletin.)

In Church B, I took over a system of nearly 40 groups that had been in place and steadily growing for many years. In this church I began with a substantial budget, a team of coaches (lay leaders overseeing small groups), and I was immediately made

a part of the church's Senior Leadership Team.

Even though the two churches' small group systems were at totally different places, I had to do exactly the same things in both situations to bring new health and growth to their groups. I've concluded that there are three simple principles for creating a thriving system of small groups. The three principles are simple but require considerable concentration, creativity, and effort.

meetings to a minimum. Don't overload the meetings with training. Give some simple awards like worship CD's to leaders who have multiplied their groups or in other ways gone the second mile. Pray and plan for meetings that have "pop." Take time to worship and give the leaders ample time with their coaches so that each person or couple can receive prayer and ministry. Strongly encourage your leaders to bring their interns and any other potential leaders to your leadership meetings.

**“I’ve concluded that there are three simple principles for creating a thriving system of small groups. The three principles are simple but require considerable concentration, creativity and effort.”**

## **Three Principles to Create a Thriving Small Group System**

*Principle #1: Provide excellent support meetings.* Like all of us, group leaders need ongoing encouragement and ministry. One of the most important ways to do this is through support meetings. Churches vary widely in how often they offer support meetings, but as a general rule you need to get your leaders together at least once a month. If you offer food many more people will come and if you offer childcare the numbers will be even greater. Do both. It costs money but it's a small price to pay in order to envision, encourage, and expand your leadership base. Keep announcements at your support

*Principle #2. Offer excellent and frequent training.* You need to offer small group leader training at least twice a year. Many churches only offer leadership training once a year, and at the same time they wonder why they don't get more new leaders. No matter how small your small group system is, offer training at least twice in your yearly calendar. Training creates a doorway into leadership and prompts you and your leaders to do more recruiting. The training should be helpful but not overwhelming. Our small group leader training is two modules of five sessions each. The first module is an all day seminar that uses the book that I wrote *Upward, Inward, Outward, Forward:*

*Improving the Four Dynamics of Your Cell Group.* It helps each leader develop a clear plan for their group in four areas: prayer, body life, outreach and leadership multiplication. The second module is a five-session weekly class called “How to Lead a Great Small Group” which looks at how to lead a meeting and deal with typical problems.

*Principle #3. Mobilize coaches.*

Coaches are individuals who generally oversee from three to eight groups. My doctoral research involving 250 groups in 32 churches revealed that the coaching of small group leaders is the most important element in creating healthy small groups. Let me give you a brainhack. Consider your current small group system. Now double your numbers (the number of leaders, participants, etc.). How many coaches, small group leaders and interns would you need for a system twice the size of your current small group ministry? Would you need to change your structure if you were twice the size? Would you need to offer training more often or work harder at recruitment? Would you need to multiply yourself and turn over certain responsibilities? Whatever you would need to change, begin to implement those changes *right now*. It is amazing but true—if you implement the system needed for twice your numbers you will, in fact, remove the barriers that are now holding you back and your ministry will move to a new level.

As you deploy more coaches, realize that it is not enough to merely place people in positions. Coaches must be mentored and trained. Their job is to encourage, support, envision and mobilize your leaders. They do this through four basic responsibilities: a) by praying consistently for their leaders, b) by getting their leaders together to minister to each other and build community, c) by meeting

one-on-one with leaders, and d) by visiting small groups to see what is happening and find future leaders. Just because you have coaches on your organizational chart doesn't necessarily mean that your leaders are being coached. If you have the people that are in place and they aren't doing their job, it's because you haven't trained and monitored them. Like small group leaders, your coaches need training and support to keep them on track and encouraged. If you have coaches that are just coasting, train them and step-by-step raise your expectations.

That's it—just three basic principles. Provide excellent support meetings. Offer frequent, quality training. And, mobilize coaches. As you do those three things, here are some things to keep in mind.

**Don't Forget!**

Have a clear vision. What are you really trying to accomplish? If you don't have a clear vision for your small groups, no one else will.

Vision doesn't come from planning or mission statements; though both of these might be helpful once you have vision. Vision comes from God and must be continually renewed. It flows from God's heart to your heart.

Get alone with God.

Take time with Him each day and then get away for longer periods of prayer. I take a day a month when I get out of my office and go to a secluded place to pray, read and hear God. Once a quarter I make it two days. Keep in touch with God and keep the vision clear.

Change takes time. Remember that the whole purpose of small groups is changed lives. People are more important than groups or systems. Few people will immediately follow you. It takes time to build credibility and trust. I remember the very first leadership team meeting that I led as a cell pastor. I planned an excellent meeting and contacted all the leaders. None of them showed

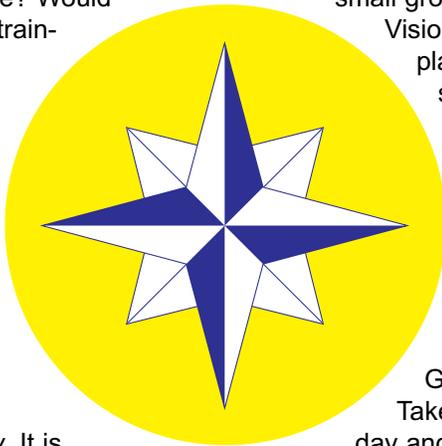
up! I wasn't their leader yet. But as I invested in current leaders and recruited new leaders, I spent lots of time with them—I ate breakfast with them, took individuals out for lunch on their birthdays, and enjoyed drinking coffee with people. When you invest time, training and resources in people, they realize that you are on their side and gladly follow. Be patient with others and yourself. Don't compare your own church or small group system with others (except to learn). And don't waste time thinking about what you don't have. Take what you do have—your time, your current and potential leaders, and your limited budget—and make things happen.

Multiply yourself. In a growing system, people at all levels are called to reproduce themselves. Members reach out to non-Christians. Group leaders and coaches mobilize new leaders. Are you likewise multiplying yourself and giving your ministry away? The first command given to humans in the Bible was: “*Be fruitful and multiply!*” (Genesis 1:28) Do it.

**It's all about Jesus!**

Remember that the focus of small groups is Jesus. You and your leaders can relax and just point people to Him. When people come in contact with Christ, they experience His power and love. Have you ever noticed as you read the Gospels that crowds of people are always trying to be with Jesus to hear His voice and be touched by Him? It's the same today. If we make Jesus the center of our lives, our small groups and our small group systems, there will be a dynamic magnetism. Point people to Jesus, and you are going to see awesome things! ♦

*Jim Egli serves as the Small Group Pastor at the Vineyard Church in Urbana, Illinois. He oversees a growing system of over 90 home and specialty groups. Jim has authored 15 books on discipleship, small group ministry and evangelism—most recently Relating Jesus: Making Christ Real in Your Everyday Relationships and SG2, The Small Group Assessment Tool.*



# **Fresh Insight**

**for cell group ministry**

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