



ANCIENT FUTURE
Group Life Conference
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COMMUNITY

**Adding a Small Groups Ministry
to a Traditional Church**

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Session Description

You have just been commissioned by leadership and given the responsibility of adding a small groups ministry to your church. Before your excitement turns to frustration and you become a church statistic, join us for a breakout that will give you the building blocks to carve out a thriving small groups ministry in a traditional church setting. This breakout is formatted to introduce key principles, and is followed by a processing environment. Bring team members and staff, or join with other church leaders, as you lay the foundation for a successful small groups future in your church.

Goals

- Address the leadership role of the small group point-person in your church.
- Develop a strategy that is well-suited for the culture of your church.
- Define essentials for a thriving small group ministry in a traditional church setting

Huddle

What would you say is the hardest task in creating a successful small group ministry in your church?

Beginnings: Understanding Your Universe/Avoiding False Starts

Two examples of false starts:

1. Directions: Beginning without a _____.
2. Instructions: Have a picture of the _____ result.

I. The Leader's Role Defined (beginnings)

Beginnings: Preparation Time

Quote: "Whatever you ignore, you _____ for." (Russ Robinson)

Three Tensions

1. Urgency and intentionality
2. Leadership's vision and your vision
3. The way we've always done things and change

The Tension Between Urgency and Intentionality

- Numerical urgency: a common _____ device
- Activity urgency: _____ mindset
- Reactive urgency: need-based

Individual Activity

If you had to rate tension from 1-10 (1 being lowest, 10 being highest), how would you rate the current tension for quick results in your church?

Numerical Urgency	1-----3-----5-----7-----10	Measuring Device
Activity Urgency	1-----3-----5-----7-----10	Program Mindset
Reactive Urgency	1-----3-----5-----7-----10	Need-Based

Huddle

Take a moment to huddle with one or two people and share your highest urgency with regard to your small group ministry.

The Tension Between Leadership's Vision and Your Vision

Primary goals: Create alignment, increase influence, get buy-in

- Getting into the mind of your leader with regard to small groups. Nailing down the end result ... what it looks like to them.
- Expressing your heart for groups to the leadership team (friends or foes — it's all in approach).
- Deal with the gap between the passion in your heart for groups and the apathy in many of your team members.
- Expanding the vision by selling the problem

Huddle

Pick one of the leadership challenges (above) and come up with one or two possible solutions.

The Tension Between the Way You've Always Done Things and Change

Primary goal: Developing a culture for change

The Support of your Senior Pastor

- Getting your pastor on _____.
- _____ your pastor's heart toward groups
- The history and _____ of your church
- Understanding _____ expression
- Your past

Individual Activity

Of the five challenges mentioned above, what do you anticipate as your #1 strength and #1 challenge in gaining the full support of your pastor in your small group initiative?

II. Building Blocks for Building a Successful Small Group Ministry

Big Picture View: Puzzle

1. Begin with the _____.
2. Look for _____ colors and shapes.
3. Build momentum by working in _____:
 - Friends
 - Family
 - Fraternity

Individual Activity

Name one to three people in each of the following groups that can help you build momentum with your small group ministry:

Friends: _____, _____, _____

Family: _____, _____, _____

Fraternity: _____, _____, _____

Frustration Reducers

1. Over-planning and under-experiencing
2. What you begin with, you rarely end with!
3. Under-communicating by a factor of x6.
Two Keys: _____, _____

Potholes to Avoid at All Costs:

1. Don't try to make your traditional church a small group model church unless...
2. Don't pick a model that has no flex in it. (Refer to Appendix A.)
3. Avoid turning the boat too quickly.

III. Keys to a Successful Start

Individual Activity

1. If you had to nail down success with your small group ministry, what would be your top three to five reasons for having a small group ministry in your church?

2. What would be your senior pastor's top three to five reasons?

3. Is there a gap? If so, process how to close the gap.

Defining Your Goal, Determining Your Role

1. Everything works backward from the target.

Perhaps most important to a successful start is knowing what the end looks like for your ministry.

Post-Conference (key question to answer):

What is the purpose for your small group ministry?

2. Two worlds coming together: managing the gap
 - Finding your _____ at the table
 - Misalignment equals _____ loss

Tips for Closing the Gap

1. Become a good listener
2. Anticipate objections
3. Sell the problem
4. Become valuable
5. Deal with territorialism

Individual Activity (10 minutes)

Challenges and threats:

What are the top one or two challenges that you are anticipating or currently facing with introducing small group ministry into the leadership culture of your church? Are you aware of any perceived threats that small group ministry could be to other ministries in your church?

Post-Conference

1. How can your small group ministry come alongside other ministries to reduce the potential threat that they may otherwise pose?

2. Do you have a solid theological argument for making the case for community? (Refer to Appendix B.)

Building Your Leadership Team

1. Who makes the team? Passion, experience, gifting, and _____.
2. Investing: There are no shortcuts. “You always get what you pay for!”
3. Pacing: “Resisting the tyranny of the urgent.”
4. Training: “Head, heart, hands.”

Individual Activity

Brainstorm: Who do you know who would commit a year to the compelling vision of community?

Post-Conference

1. As a team, identify key members who can make up or strengthen your existing leadership team.
2. Team-building: Identify key roles for your leadership team and approach according to gifting.
3. Resource them on the role of “coaching.”

IV. Implementation

Creating Wins

- **Focus:** clear target (begin with a goal that has much alignment with your church's vision and values)
- **Considerations:** Wade in. Create safe environments for community: dinner groups, luncheons, stand-alone events, short-term experiences.
- **Choose leaders:** recruit _____.
- **Wisdom:** The meeting before the meeting: deal with power brokers/key influencers (ask for their help).
- **Momentum:** Pick your low-hanging fruit. Find 20% who will commit before the official launch.
- **Promotion:** Education, vision, strategy, and branding.
- **Timing:** Initial/secondary push
- **Resolve:** Don't look back except to learn.

Individual Activity

Of the previously listed processes, which are clear? Which need to be addressed to strengthen the success of the small group ministry in your church?

Post-Conference

1. Who are the "meeting-before the-meeting" people with whom you need to have conversations? Are you the best person to have those conversations, or is there someone else who needs to talk with certain groups of them?
2. Can you identify your 20% group? If so, name them and begin to prepare your invitation (be sure to have a clear ask with clear commitment expectations).

Questions & Answers

Small Group Models

	Church with Groups	Church of Groups	Church is Groups
Purpose	help people find a place in the church	core of church as community	primary expression of church
Group Membership	not required for membership	required for church membership	required for church membership
Role of Group Leaders	mostly reactive leader: needs of group	proactive shepherd-leader	pastoral shepherd-authority
Use of Curriculum	chosen by leader	recommended by staff or by leader	designated by staff
Church Authority Over Group	low	low	high
Church Monitoring of Groups	low	high	high
Group-based Evangelistic Activity	possible	encouraged	expected
Models	neighborhood, ABF	meta-model, free market, purpose driven	cell, G-12, house church

Scriptural References

Genesis 1:24-25

Exodus 18

Psalms 133

Proverbs 15:22

Proverbs 18:24

Ecclesiastes 4:9-10

John 17

Acts 2:41-47; 4:32-37

I Corinthians 12

Ephesians 2:4

Training Resources

Books

Leading Life-Changing Small Groups by Bill Donahue
Facilitation verses teaching; core components of group life (example: group covenants, problem solving, etc.)

Walking the Small Group Tightrope by Bill Donahue and Russ Robinson
A practical guide to several key tensions that small group leaders face in having a quality small group ministry

Seven Deadly Sins of Small Group Ministry by Bill Donahue and Russ Robinson
Practical guides to group life

Starting Small Groups by Jeffrey Arnold

DVD Curriculum

ReGroup: Training Groups to Be Groups by Bill Donahue, Henry Cloud, and John Townsend
Dealing with issues that come up in group. Available at www.willowcreek.com

Leadership/Core Team Training

Books

Coaching Life-Changing Small Group Leaders by Bill Donahue and Greg Bowman
Excellent resource for developing your coaching structures

Good to Great by Jim Collins
Excellent book on the transferable principles that make businesses excel

Leading Congregational Change by Jim Herrington, Mike Bonem, and James H. Furr

Events

For information on small group advanced training opportunities from Willow Creek, visit www.willowcreek.com/grouplife

Maximum Impact (www.maximumimpact.com)
Two-day seminar on influence, EQ, and becoming a more effective leader