
WHAT TO DO WHEN: YOUR SMALL GROUP PROGRAM WANES

Episode Description

The great hope of the church from the nineties to the present has been focused on small groups. Small groups were where we expected people to get connected, to get spiritually fed, and to grow as a disciple. Some churches also hoped the groups would do hands-on mission and multiply as well. Only thing is, most small group initiatives in most churches start with a bang and then wither on the vine. In this episode, Drs. Bill and Kris will offer some helps to get your small groups back on track.

Episode Outline

Why Small Group Programs Wane

- Groups get stale – no one new comes in ... or no one new comes in and stays
- Groups never end – seem to require a lifetime commitment
- Groups are too fluffy – they don't accomplish anything
- Groups are too touchy-feely
- The church can't find new leaders
- Groups aren't supported by the church leadership (especially the pastor)

Not Every Small Group is a “Small Group”

Small groups are not the panacea that many church leaders hope/expect. Like everything else, a small group will accomplish one primary purpose. There are different missions of different styles of small groups.

- Fellowship Groups – create connections
- Classes – teach knowledge, AKA Christian Ed
- Task Groups – get something done
- Life or Discipleship Groups – develop disciples

Jump Starting Your Small Group Program

It won't happen without church leadership support

Develop (or adapt) three different small group types

- These become your small group funnel
1. Short-term, low commitment, small groups designed for fellowship.
 - These are entry point groups.
 - Think 3–6 weeks, small group lite
 2. Mid-commitment small group that are topical and a bit deeper in content.

-These are typically “classes,” but should also be introductions to the longer-term Life/Discipleship groups.

-Think 8–12 weeks.

3. Long-term disciple-making groups (life groups, etc.).

-Designed around a disciple-making curriculum.

-Think 9-11 months

Nuts-N-Bolts

1. Start a new short-term group every month or so (the larger the church, the more you need to start).
2. Target the short-term groups for specific audiences.
3. Start a new mid-level group every quarter (more often in larger churches ... stagger them for quick entry dates)
4. Start Discipleship/Life groups as needed, but big push in August/September
5. Pastor must preach about them, model attendance, talk about them, etc.
-and not just once a year but regularly

See *Multiplying Small Groups* and *Small Group Leadership* for more

Discussion Questions

1. Share your best small group experience. What made it so great?
2. Why do you think small groups stop growing shortly after they've started?
3. How often does your church start new small groups?
4. What do you think would happen if most small groups in your church were of limited duration?
5. How can your church increase the number of participants in small groups?