

GIVING IT AWAY: LEADERSHIP EQUIPPING AND MULTIPLICATION

The Equipping Leader

Our small groups grow and become healthy largely through a process whereby existing leaders equip, identify and "raise up" group members in their gifts and calling within the body of Christ. Paul explains in I Corinthians 12:4-7, "There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good."

The model for equipping is given to us by Jesus himself. If we consider that Jesus called 12 men to spend 3 years with him in ministry and changed the world through their lives, it would be important to consider the way Jesus helped them understand his ministry, how he helped them try his ministry, and then how he actually released them to do his ministry. Jesus was committed to giving away what he had been given so that the Kingdom of God could expand. Even like a mustard seed, we as leaders sometimes feel so small and insignificant but Jesus promised that this seed could grow through faith in Him.

From the moment you enter into leadership of your group, you need to be thinking about employing others in your group to teach, to lead worship, to organize outreaches and lead prayer ministry time. The goal for you as an equipper is to be freed up to do what you are most gifted to do and to employ others to do the same. If members of your group are struggling to find their gifts and are uncertain about taking on extra responsibility, this may take time to build. Be sensitive to the needs of your group members but also work towards involving them. We want to foster non-dependency on us, to constantly raise up others who can do what we are doing. We're doing a good job when we can take a month off and our group can keep going without us!

Multiplication is God's Plan

Jesus stands among His few disciples and says, "As the Father has sent Me, I am sending you". And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit." (John 20:21-22) He then expected these Spirit-filled disciples to produce his likeness and his ministry in others – just as he had in them. Jesus' entire strategy and the fulfillment of his very purpose for coming into the world, dying on the cross, and rising from the grave, depended upon the faithfulness of his chosen disciples to accomplish this task. It did not matter how small the group was to start with, so long as they reproduced and taught their disciples to reproduce. This was the strategy in the mind of God—to reach the world through relational multiplication. It was the way the Gospel would conquer. He had no other plan. Only a few years later it was said of the Christians that they turned the world upside down (Acts 17:6 KJV). Apparently, his plan works!

Our principle of multiplication of small groups comes directly from Jesus' own life and ministry and, as always is the case, Satan wages war against this truth with lies. The truth is this: *Multiplying a small group when ready or needed is healthy both for the group and for the Kingdom of God.* The lie says multiplying is a painful event, a split that severs relationships. Because of this lie, very few small groups, left to their own devices, would ever multiply.

Sometimes we can be wary of growth. It seems to go against our nature. *At Vineyard Columbus we believe in multiplying through relationships. Close relationships that develop are encouraged to stay together and become a core group of a new home group.*

Multiplication becomes a fruit of ministry

In John 15:1-8, Jesus tells us that reproducing – bearing fruit – is the purpose of both the vine (Himself) and the branches (believers in Him). He went on to declare that any branch that did not

bear fruit was to be cut off – it was useless and worthless. Any branch that lived on the vine had to produce and grow to survive – that was its intended purpose.

The key to the multiplication process is reproducing disciples and leaders. Paul's relationship with Timothy provides an outstanding scriptural model of how future home group leaders are to be recruited and equipped.

"You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus and the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others" (2 Timothy 2:1,2).

As challenging as it is to care for people in the group, we must deliberately seek to focus a significant portion of our energies on those who exhibit leadership giftings, i.e. being able to identify, recruit and train others. If those we seek to equip do not have this goal in their hearts, we must pray for and look for those who have this goal. It is important to equip and mentor assistant leaders who will function as apprentices. Christ instructed us not to pray for the harvest, which is indeed plentiful, but for workers to be sent into the harvest.

What are some things that can help you develop an "equipping" mentality?

Develop a Core Team - Think through how you will develop a *core team* which would be a small group within the group. This core team would help you support and care as "assistants" to you. Think about how to raise up them up as leaders and maybe at some point, even release them to lead their own group. Reflect on who in your core team is doing specific things and what those specific things are.

Develop male & female co-leadership. Most groups that fold had one of these two things missing. It is important to have male/female co-leadership of a coed group in order to properly pastor everyone. It is also important that all the responsibility of leading doesn't fall on one person or one couple. You should quickly raise up someone or a couple to commit to co-leadership of the group.

Plan ahead for future leadership. Identify regular attendees as you plan for whom to bring into the core group, as well as plan for birthing. This also helps to distribute the ministry care and increase the arm length of the ministry.

Create a teaching schedule. Many leaders don't have a plan on where to go as far as their teaching for the next 2 months, so teaching tends to be problem based. For instance, if several people in their group are struggling with sexual sin, they may do a few weeks on purity. While this is good and sometimes necessary, it may be more helpful to have the leader picture in his or her mind what a 'finished group may look like' (what they think the Lord may have for the group before it births) and then develop a multifaceted plan on how to get there.

Six Steps to Giving Ministry Away

1. Identify – Look for people who are:

- Faithful
 - 2 Timothy 2:2 – Paul tells Timothy to entrust what he had been taught to faithful (reliable, trustworthy) men who would also be qualified to teach others.
 - Matthew 25:21 – The Parable of the Bags of the Talents -...he who is faithful with a few things will be given more.
- Available
 - Available doesn't mean people who are idle or unoccupied, rather people who are willing.
 - 2 Chronicles 16:9 – For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him.

- Matthew 10:39 - It costs to follow Jesus – “...whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.” It costs to follow Jesus; we may have to rearrange our priorities some hobbies may have to take a back seat etc.
- Availability is a two way street; we need to also make ourselves available
- Have Influence
 - In the group or in their place of work, people go to them.
- Teachable
 - Acts 4:13 – the twelve Jesus chose were unschooled and very ordinary men but they were willing to learn. You want people who are open to instruction, correction and learning
- Hungry
 - Psalm 42:1 – As the deer pants for water so my soul pants for you my God. Look for people who want more of God. They should have a strong vertical pull on their life.

2. Recruit:

As you identify those who are ready for discipleship you want to invite them into relationship.

- Give them an invitation to be your apprentice.
- Share your vision for them.
- Let them begin to be your shadow so to speak as you do ministry.

3. Train:

Training will involve imparting the basics of the Christian life but also the basics of leading a small group. Give them opportunity to do the stuff. Assign them work; show them how it's done and let them do it. Give them opportunities to:

- Teach/lead discussion
- Lead Ministry Time
- Counsel people in your group or meet one on one

4. Monitor:

You will always want to follow up with them after they have completed an assignment to give encouragement, constructive criticism and further instruction.

It's very difficult for people to step into leadership if they have never participated in leading. Here is the standard discipleship cycle:

- You do it
- You do it while they watch
- They do it with you
- You watch them do it
- You release them to do it

2. Deploy:

Finally you want to release them to lead. We must pass the baton to new leaders and encourage them to do the same if the Kingdom is going to continue to grow

- 2 Timothy 2:2 – And these things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.

3. Coach:

Continue to encourage and follow up with them after they have started their own group.

Preparing for Multiplication

There are many different ways to multiply your group. Some groups multiply within a year; others take closer to two years. Whatever the pace your group is going, you need to make a plan for multiplication. Here are some practical ways to prepare for group multiplication:

1. Frequently communicate to the group that growing is a goal (including evangelism) and that multiplication is God's heart.
2. Encourage members to bring friends, believers, and those who are not yet believers.
3. Raise up male & female co-leadership teams of 3-4
4. Release more and more leadership responsibility to the assistant leader(s) to test ministry and character. Start them on the track of leadership by getting them into these three prerequisites for leadership:
 - a. Newcomers Class
 - b. Prayer Ministry Training
 - c. Intro to Leadership
5. When an assistant leader has been tested and proven, it is time to discuss releasing the assistant into co-leadership. Send the leader(s) through the next New Leader's Training.
6. When a group is consistently larger than 12 for a men's/women's group and 25 for a coed group, it is time to think about multiplying.

Some models for Multiplication

- Send out a "plant" small leadership team of 3-6 to start a new group.
- "Split" or "birth" the group into 2 or more smaller groups.
- Raise up leaders to take your place in the group. Slowly step out of the main leadership and then you can start a new group.