

Leadership Tips

on Growing 21st Century Small Groups & House Churches

A publication of
Leadership Development
Open Bible Churches
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FALL-WINTER 2009

This issue of *Leadership Tips* is an excerpt from the Participant Manual for the book *Growing 21st Century Small Groups & House Churches* by Larry Kreider and Joel Comiskey. (House to House Publications, 2009)

SESSION 1

What do cell groups and house churches look like in the 21st century?

- Previous understanding of house church
 - Community of 20-40 people meeting together on weekly basis
 - Many network together while some don't recognize any structure beyond themselves
- New understanding of house church
 - Smaller size
 - Between 8-15 members; multiply every 6 to 9 months
 - More frequent celebration and teaching gatherings
 - The lines are becoming blurred/fuzzy
- The cell is the church and must have a qualitative definition
 - Some define small groups as "anything that is small and a group." The underlying thinking is: "give the people all the variety possible."
 - One definition: "any gathering of less than a dozen people is small group"
 - Broad definition: Deacon's meeting, prison ministry task group, choir group, or horseback riding club
 - Expanded Definition: "A cell is a small group of 3-15 people who form the basic unit of Christian community. It functions to provide a place where members gather around the presence of Christ, support one another as a family, reach out in ministry and evangelism to the hurting world, and mentor and release new leaders. The ultimate goal of each cell is to multiply itself as the group grows through evangelistic outreach. Cell groups meet weekly outside the church facility in an effort to penetrate the world." (Don Tillman, Joel Comiskey, Scott Boren).
 - Comiskey's definition: 3-15 meet weekly outside church building for evangelism, community, and discipleship with the goal of multiplication.

- Cell churches and house churches are cousins
 - Kreider says, “The cell group movement that I am a part of will need to be careful to guard its heart as the new house church networks spring up alongside our cell group community churches.”
 - David Brandon, C&MA cell church pastor, “We are encouraging House Church plants. So far groups are experimenting with staying away from our Sunday Services monthly. We are encouraging them to transition to coming to the AM service monthly – even bi-monthly.”
- New emphasis on church planting
 - Rapid multiplication
 - Cell begins in homes
 - Multiplies to 5-20 cells
 - Discovers the “gifted” pastor and continues the process in same city
 - Cells congregate in house churches
 - Smaller cell-based churches network together

The new emerging house-church networks

- Why house churches?
- Reaching a new generation
- Three kinds of churches
- House church networks worldwide

Regional Church	Community Churches like a community store
	Mega-churches like a Wal-Mart superstore
	House Church Networks like a shopping mall

SESSION 2

How to lead a cell group and how to lead a house church

- Order for cell group
 - Welcome
 - Worship
 - Lesson and prayer
 - Vision casting
- Edification in the cell group
 - Build up/edify cell members
 - How to build up/edify
 - Healing of hurts
 - Salvations
 - Deliverance
 - Transparency opens the door to edification
 - Promote open sharing
 - Begins with leader

- Keep the cell small
 - Communication lines
 - Two people – 2 lines
 - Four people – 12 lines
 - Ten people – 90 lines
 - 15 people – 210 lines
 - Jesus chose community of twelve
- Create responsiveness
- Concentrate on listening
- What an effective leader does
 - Clarifies and restates ideas
 - Can get everyone to talk
 - Shows care for persons
 - Is enthusiastic
 - Practices self-disclosure (vulnerable)
 - Asks stimulating questions
 - Listens intently
 - Explains clearly
 - Helps people share true feelings
 - Is open to varied opinions and evaluations
 - Can summarize thoughts and draw conclusions
- Jesus at the center
 - The Goal: leader is filled with Christ before meeting begins
 - Focus of the cell must be Jesus
- Edifications also happens between cell members outside of the cell meeting
- What do house churches look like?
 - Many types of house churches
 - What do the house church meetings look like?
 - Children in house church meetings
 - Where do they meet?
 - Leadership in house churches
 - Disciple makers
 - House church leaders
 - Elders
 - Apostolic leaders
 - The four parts of the house church meeting
 1. Eating
 2. Meeting
 3. Small groups
 4. Meeting after meeting
 - Worship in house churches
- Twelve scriptural values for house church and small group ministry
 - Core Values
 1. Preparing for the harvest
 2. Teaching people to know Jesus (prayer)
 3. Reaching the lost (evangelism)
 4. The Great Commission (discipleship)
 5. Seeing the church as people, not a building
 6. Called to do the work of ministry
 7. Building trust and relationships
 8. Expecting spiritual multiplication
 9. Encouraging flexibility and creativity
 10. Empowering God's people
 11. God is building teams in His church today
 12. Raising up spiritual parents

SESSION 3

Evangelism in cell groups and evangelism in house churches

- The key role of cell evangelism in the cell church's around the world
 - Growing cell churches prioritize evangelism
- Biblical evangelism word picture: net fishing
 - Cell evangelism is a shared experience. Everyone [in the small group] gets involved
- As a group, tap into God's power through prayer
- Mobilize the cell; it's not just the leader's job to evangelize
- Mobilize the cell; most effective witness is to share authentically as a group
- Various group activities to reach non-Christians
 - "Jesus" video
 - Secular video with a specific purpose in mind (e.g. Shindler's List)
 - Special dinner or potluck
 - Picnic
- Evangelism in the cell church take place in both cell and celebration
- Keep evangelism central
- The power of our testimony (Revelation 12:11) – people should hear that we have experienced the same needs they have.
 - Before conversion – Acts 26:4-11
 - Conversion – Acts 26:12-18
 - After conversion – Acts 26:19-33
- Making it easier to plant churches and reach the unchurched
 - Evangelism and the house church
 - House church multiplication
 - Spiritual families
 - Releasing every believer to use their God-given gifts

SESSION 4

Multiplication of the cell group and house church

- Cell multiplication: helps and hindrances
 - **Hindrance:** multiplication mandates (e.g., "all cells must multiply in six months")
 - **Help:** understand the soil and context
 - **Hindrance:** the mentality that multiplication is the "the numbers game"
 - **Help:** promote multiplication as a health factor
 - **Hindrance:** lack of vision and direction
 - **Help:** promote the vision of cell ministry and plan multiplication based on who and where a person is in the equipping process

- Cell groups have tendency to turn inward...become self-absorbing; need a clear-cut goal to keep outwardly focused.
- Cell leaders who know date for cell multiplication more likely to actually multiply their cell than those without set goal.
 - **Hindrance:** lack of equipping focus
 - **Help:** emphasis on leadership training (disciples who make disciples)
 - **Hindrance:** too little focus on the nucleus
 - **Help:** remind people that the nucleus – not the cell – multiplies
 - **Hindrance:** one person leading more than one cell
 - **Help:** the essence of cell ministry is making disciples who make disciples
 - **Hindrance:** lack of variety in multiplication
 - **Help:** provide different options for multiplication
 - **Hindrance:** no evangelism in the cell
 - **Help:** stir each member to reach out
 - **Hindrance:** equating evangelism with cell multiplication
 - **Help:** multiplication entails a number of other disciplines

House group / house church multiplication

- God is a God of multiplication
 - Everything that is healthy and filled with life will multiply
 - In order for life to be maintained, there must be multiplication
 - Additions vs. Multiplication
- Practical steps for healthy house group multiplication
 - Use the analogy of a family.
 - Be open to creative models of multiplication.
 - Have as many assistant leaders as possible.
 - Pour your time into faithful people/future leaders
 - Have the assistant leaders receive regular training
 - When the timing is right, start a new house church.
 - Share the vision for multiplication with the house church
 - Have a commissioning at a house church meeting.
 - Celebrate the multiplication at the monthly celebration.
- What if the house churches do not multiply?
 - Not every group will successfully multiply.
- The group that has grown too large
 - The largest home group in the history of DCFI was 85 people.
 - What to do with a large group?
 - The large home eventually became a community cell church.
- Multiply leaders
- Encourage future leaders

SESSION 5

Leadership development in the cell and the house church

- The over-riding principle: leaders are the base! It's a leadership strategy!
 - Expansion proportional to number of leaders
 - Focus on number of disciples who make disciples – not number of groups
 - Jesus devoted time to leadership training – see book of Mark
- Wesley and Whitefield
- Two fundamentals
 - First – allow each cell member to perform significant cell tasks
 - Second – Make sure potential cell leader receives training
- Examples of excellent equipping tracks
 - International Charismatic Mission
 - Bethany World Prayer Center
 - Neighbour's equipping track
 - Little Falls Christian Center
 - The Republic Church
 - Comiskey equipping track
- Differences between education and training
 - Education continues throughout life; training is for a specific purpose
- Training
 - Best equipping tracks
 - Clear place to start
 - Clear knowledge of where to go
 - Clear idea of victory
 - Material for best training systems
 - Teaches basic Christian doctrine
 - Teaches the church vision
 - Not overwhelming
 - Best models have
 - Clear goals
 - Everyone enters track to become a disciple who makes disciples
 - Firmly rooted on the Word of God
- Education
 - General education model
 - No definite starting point
 - The track is not clear
 - No place to serve
 - Material is endless
 - Goal is "Christian Education"
 - Training lasts for years (life-time)
 - A church in Texas requires volunteers to take 435 hours of formal classroom training to become certified lay minister. Result of training: they can choose to serve as parking lot attendant, greeter-usher or participate in seasonal pageant.
 - In many churches does not lead to a goal
 - Can be deceptively ineffective
 - Same 35% trained again & again (often little application)
 - Almost never a system to move people to leadership

- Cell Training Models
 - Definite time frame to complete
 - Vary from 4 months – 1 year
 - Key Principles
 - #1 – Keep the training track simple & feasible
 - #2 – Provide the action steps for each level
 - #3 – provide advanced training for cell leaders
 - #4 – have only one equipping track
 - #5 – There are various training methods (classes, one-on-one, retreats, etc.)
 - #6 – Each member is a disciple who makes other disciples and should be trained accordingly
 - #7 – Adjust and improve the training continually
- Equipping starts at conversion
- Final advice
 - Constantly involve people in ministry and watch them
 - Give people responsibilities before titles
 - Attempt to recruit and train more leaders than you need
 - Invest lots of time & money in training

SESSION 6

Nuts and bolts for effective cell group ministry and healthy house church ministry

- Cell pastoral leadership
 - **Myth:** all a pastor has to do is believe in the cell vision and start the model
 - **Truth:** a pastor needs to concentrate to make cell ministry work
- Cell church and western culture
 - **Myth:** cells don't work in North America and western culture
 - **Truth:** not much works in North America and western culture and cells work better than any other strategy for long term health and growth
- Church planting and mega churches
 - **Myth:** cell churches are mega churches
 - **Truth:** relatively few cell churches will reach mega church status
 - **Myth:** it's desirable to grow to mega church status
 - **Truth:** it's better to plant cell churches at a smaller size
- Cell church brings growth
 - **Myth:** if I choose to go cell church, my church will grow
 - **Truth:** only Jesus can grow the church
- G12 Myth
 - **Myth:** the number twelve brings life
 - **Truth:** there are many great numbers in the Bible
- Vision
 - **Myth:** tell the church how wrong it is and how great the ideal cell church is
 - **Truth:** people need to see it worked out. Don't oversell the cell concept. Just do it and then let them see it

- Failure
 - **Myth:** if you fail once, don't try again
 - **Truth:** you need to be willing to fail several times to get it right
- Homogeneity
 - **Myth:** you must have one type of homogeneity in cells – men and women cells, for example
 - **Truth:** define your cells with a quality definition in mind and then realize that any type of homogeneity is great
- Leadership development
 - **Myth:** the cell church is all about the cell
 - **Truth:** the cell church is all about leadership development; it's about raising up an army of disciples who make other disciples
- Community and evangelism
 - **Myth:** evangelism in the cell church is only relational
 - **Truth:** try every conceivable method and remember *spoudé* (diligence)
 - **Myth:** cells equal community
 - **Truth:** community is an essential focus but cells also emphasize evangelism, spiritual growth, and multiplication
- Evangelistic legalism
 - **Myth:** you have to lead 4 people to Christ before you can multiply the cell
 - **Truth:** you want future leaders to be practicing evangelism but avoid cell legalism at all costs
- The leader doing all the evangelism work
 - **Myth:** the cell leaders does the evangelism
 - **Truth:** use each member of the cell. Remember net fishing
- Coaching
 - **Myth:** coaching means only listening and is therapeutic
 - **Truth:** coaching contains a wide variety of disciplines
- The cell will meet all the needs
 - **Myth:** the small group meeting should meet all the needs of the members
 - **Truth:** the small group meeting is only one aspect of community life
- Hospitality
 - **Myth:** one person should be the permanent host
 - **Truth:** it's great if the host house is shared – even better if someone has the give of hospitality
- The leader developing all the relationships in the group
 - **Myth:** the cell leader should develop all the relationships in the group
 - **Truth:** individuals within the group should share the relational commitment
- Lack of a core team in the cell
 - **Myth:** the cell should primarily have non-Christians
 - **Truth:** the core of the cell is essential and should be a primary focus
- Pitfalls to avoid in house church ministry

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Pride ▪ Fear ▪ Independent spirit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Heresy ▪ Forgetting the Great Commission ▪ Not honoring the whole body of Christ
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