

Home Groups  
Breakout Session  
UNLEASH 2008  
Michael Brown  
Pastor of Home Groups

#### PURPOSE:

The purpose of the small group ministry must be aligned with the purpose of the church. Must know why you are doing small groups and be able to give reason to be tied to vision of the church.

NewSpring has 7 core values, two of which are:

- A.** Fellowship
- B.** Discipleship

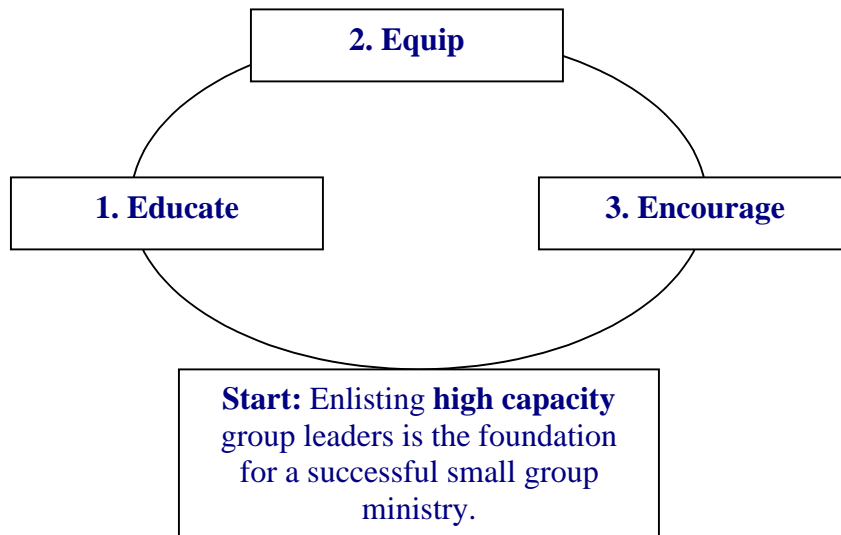
Sustained life change occurs in small group environments. Life is tough and friends change, but groups are to create growth through relationships with other people. Sunday is the front door of the church and groups serve as the back door.

#### STRATEGY:

- C.** Open or Closed Groups: Newspring started as open, then closed, now a balance of both-leader discerns purpose of group and whether they are open to adding more members
  - Characteristics of Open: fellowship centered, not a lot of open discussion
  - Characteristics of Closed: intimate, discipleship
- D.** Structured or Unstructured Groups:
  - Characteristics of Structured: set time, place, purpose (study) keeps everyone accountable
  - Characteristics of Unstructured: anything goes (different times, etc), leader must be strong
- E.** GroupLink or Assigned (based on form): describes how groups form
  - Characteristics of GroupLink: meet/greet leaders, speed dating, awkward, high quality groups
  - Characteristics of Assigned: process must be well-defined, connects to masses, quantity, first meeting is awkward (no one has met), commitment is less

Will your strategy change with your ministry? Your ministry must be expandable and be willing to change. The focus is more important than keeping things the same.

GROUP LEADERS:



Inspect what you expect! Verbal contact w/ every leader is important. Decide frequency depending on ministry and vision. NewSpring discipleship staff oversees group leaders, not group members. Often host group leader meetings for open discussion and training.

Start: High potential leaders are people sold out to the vision of the church and the small group ministry. They have more than just a good heart.

Educate: Healthy group members = healthy leaders, apprentice new leaders and train them on how to handle possible situations

Equip: assign group members, assign goals, give resources to succeed

Encourage: Must do this through entire cycle!

## Q & A

Why did NewSpring change from the GroupLink model to assigning them after a Groups Sermon w/ signups in service?

We needed to increase number in groups at a quicker rate, which was decided by our senior management staff that it was needed. The challenge is still getting people to show up and commit to the group since signing up in a service is easy.

How do you get diversity in groups?

People may request certain criteria on the signup form and we will do our best to accommodate. Groups will also form based on specific interest of leader(s). Take these on a case by case basis.

How did NewSpring start their small group ministry? What would we change?

NewSpring Church started grass-roots, from a small group setting and it continued to grow. We would have used volunteers more.

How do you handle childcare for groups?

The leader(s) of the group decide on solution after first meeting. Some have babysitter in a different room of host's house and pay per child.

Does NewSpring provide resources for leaders?

Group leader decides topic of study based on group's needs. We have a resource list available for group leaders to check-out including Nooma videos, North Point series', LIQUID DVDs, Beth Moore DVDs, and resources from Creative Pastors.com.

Is NewSpring (and the groups ministry) relational or informational based?

We have a general rule to only make announcements in the service that apply to the entire church body (Membership, baptism, etc) with more detailed information online or at the info kiosk.

Describe structure of sign-ups in service and placement in groups.

Invitation style challenge to sign-up after the service. Had over 1500 sign-ups to join a group via paper form. Assigned groups based on demographic and matched criteria chosen by leader and signup as close as possible. Leader contacted group members with details of the first meeting (possibly a restaurant for the first one).

How do you plug people into groups between Groups Sermon w/ signups and/or GroupLink?

The staff assigns new signups or people looking for a different group into an open group usually one day a week for a couple of hours.

What happens after groups meet for the 6 week trial?

Group will decide whether to continue and remain open or closed, multiply, join with another group, or stop meeting altogether.