

Christian Leadership 3 – Week 8

Cell Groups in Adult Home Churches (abridged)

by Doug Patch

...A Cell Group's Goal

Home church leaders should discuss and agree on the unique contribution cells should make toward fulfilling the Great Commission. I assume your home church's overarching goal is toward fulfilling the Great Commission and that you evaluate every wineskin through how it contributes to pouring the wine out for the saved and lost alike.

We propose that *your cells become focused on* equipping the saints for the work of service (Eph. 4:11,12).

[*NOTE: this is an initiative/focus in Doug Patch's sphere & may not reflect your Sr. Sph. Leader's desires]

Before you think, "So this is just about training for ministry output" – please read on. Strongly consider cells being a subset of home church *reserved for* more committed believers who are developed to become godly ambassadors, and where future leaders are identified and in part trained. The topics are explicitly tied in to the Great Commission.¹ This helps the leader carry out one of their most important and ongoing roles: to train up workers and future leaders. If you clearly communicate the purpose of cells in your home church's mission (regularly) and then concretely demonstrate it by the subject matter chosen God can work through your efforts to transform people. The Holy Spirit will not only empower people to serve Him, but He will help keep your home church outward-focused, maintaining an ethos of evangelism and loving one another.

Sometimes topics are chosen with too little consideration of the mission. The pressing needs of the home church members always drive the topics – more of a "reactionary" decision. The months, even years, roll on with few topics that equip the saints in evangelism and discipleship. *Of course*, there are times where we must react to unexpected problems. But even then we look for ways to approach it reminding people that ultimately "our usefulness to the Master" is at stake as an important motive to grow.

...Or we choose a topic because, "I heard this group did that and really liked it!" And sometimes that is a good route to go. But are your decisions primarily made by asking, "What does our group NEED to grow as faithful witnessing disciples so that we may advance His Kingdom?"

The sphere team therefore is proposing that if you aren't already intentionally using your cells to equip the saints for the work of service, that you give prayerful thought to that and discuss the matter with your consultant.*

A Biblical Framework for Choosing Topics

God's personal will is to transform us to be more Christ-like. This has at least these two dimensions: character sanctification and ministry purpose (see Christian Ministry 3 notes on "Decision Making"). He wants us to progressively grow in our character to reflect the love of Christ to the lost and one another, and to discover and use the spiritual gifts He has given us in a lifestyle of ministry. This provides us a framework for cell groups. We propose toggling your cell topics between:

1. Character sanctification
2. Ministry development
3. Growing a quality vertical relationship with God
(IE. – 'be strong in His grace', in part, through a growing personal time with God).

To that end, we have developed an index of topics and resources in these three categories that we hope will reduce the logistic hassles of finding resources *and* help you keep a strategic focus on equipping the saints for the work of service. These obviously dovetail and overlap. Many of the topics we can just as easily justify putting under a different theme. The "Cell Topic Index" is a work in progress.

Important Considerations

- Good leaders inform the group of the rationale behind the decisions you make, especially in the use of structures you want them to embrace. When we communicate how structures further God's purpose for the church and tie

¹ By this I do NOT mean you would only teach on evangelism and discipleship. But that any topic – marriage, parenting, developing a personal walk with God, etc. – would explicitly tie into how God expects that area to further His Kingdom purpose.

it to scripture, believers are far more likely to hear from the Lord and respond to the call for involvement as a leading from Him, not a human mandate. It also trains them for future leadership when you explain how to make these decisions. Your consultant would be happy to help you work through how to present this in a worker meeting setting if you wish.

- Classes and cell groups both contribute to the equipping of the saints for the work of service.

On the one hand, we never want to lower the bar of involvement in Christian community below where the Lord holds it. Cell groups are one piece of our home church's attempt to have quality community. In our western culture, *few* believers would intuitively embrace the level of relational investment and community commitment that the New Testament reflects is normative for a spiritually maturing Christian. If honest, we can probably all admit recurrent struggles on this front.

On the other hand, it is wise to evaluate if we are duplicating effort and perhaps detracting from other essential elements of ministry. Classes are also vital to Xenos' efforts to live out Ephesians 4:11,12. Highly trained and gifted teachers offer a variety of classes that your home church members would benefit from and many are required for leadership roles. Some home groups with many children have cancelled a women's or men's cell for a quarter so that all can take classes. Please speak with your consultant about this, first.

- Men's and women's cells covering the same material?

Consider whether to have the men's and women's cell cover the same material at the same time. This is another area of flexibility of course for leaders to decide. However, if there are weaknesses in key areas of ministry across the board in a home church, then all the cells covering the same material might be one of the quickest ways to turn that around! There are other side benefits: married couples can discuss the material; men and women leaders are helping one another find or develop good material.

- Each subject must be infused with scripture – not only theological concepts. If the material being studied is solid doctrine but without very much scriptural support, you need to provide that.