

Christian Leadership 3 – Week 9
A Call for Collaborative Home Group Planting

Our convictions about planting home groups

We are committed to planting healthy home groups. Since genuine Christian community is essential for spiritual maturity (Eph. 4:15,16), and since we are to welcome new people into this kind of community (Acts 2:47), we must have some way of multiplying home groups. There are different ways to do this, but probably the best way is to organically plant new home groups from existing ones. This commitment confronts us with a key current problem . . .

Our current problem

Since we have agreed to prefer bigger home groups (20 average attendance minimum) and larger leadership teams (4 average), conventional planting (planting 2 home groups from 1) would require existing home groups to:

- Grow to around 40 average attendance. Growing from 20-40 people can take a very long time for most adult home groups.
- Raise up an entire 4-person home group leadership team. This can be daunting for adult home groups.
- Have homes large enough to host meetings of 40+ people. Most members don't have homes big enough to hold more than 30 people.

At the same time, we have seen that home groups that do not plant within a few to several years often become stagnant and/or ingrown. We want to avoid this situation, so we need to devise measures that will help our existing home groups to plant . . .

One solution: collaborative planting

“Collaborative planting” refers to two or more home groups contributing to the planting of a new home group. Given our space and field challenges (see above), consider the reasons why collaborative planting makes sense:

- 3-from-2 plants require each home group to grow from 20 to 30 and to raise up 2 new home group leaders. This is a challenge – but much more doable within a reasonable amount of time! Many of our home groups could participate in this kind of plant within the next few years.
- 3 or more home groups can contribute smaller groups of people and/or leaders, making it possible for even more home groups to contribute to planting.

Collaborative home group planting has several additional benefits:

- It will increase sphere unity as people from different parts of our sphere join hands to build the church. We do not view our home groups as independent churches, but as part of the same local church. We pool our resources in many areas (e.g., finances; equipping classes; CT's) because we can achieve much more by doing this than standing alone. We should view home group planting in this same light.
- It will provide a way to create home groups with more geographic focus. This will enhance home group community and may attract more neighbors.

- It will provide for the healthy cross-pollination of different ministry experiences, strategies, leadership styles, gifting, ministry team involvement, relationships, outreach opportunities, etc. All of this will help us to “raise our game.”
- It will provide a way to help home groups that are experiencing numerical growth that outstrips their ability to raise up sufficient new workers and leaders.

Collaborative planting is not new

As you probably know, our church has utilized this strategy in various ways for over 30 years. For example:

- Many of us have participated fruitfully in past collaborative home group plants.
- The college ministry uses collaborative plants to help overcome their (different) limitations.
- Other adult spheres have been planting collaboratively for some time and prefer it.
- Many of us have collaborated this past year to strengthen our existing home groups.
- Some home groups in our sphere are currently collaborating in order to plant.

What is new, then, is not the idea of collaborative planting, but making collaborative plants more the *norm* than the exception.

Sacrifices required by collaborative planting

All home group planting is difficult and requires sacrifice. Jesus likened building His church to an army storming the gates of His enemy’s fortress! Therefore, we need to count the cost, while also counting on His support and blessing as we pursue His will.

- Collaborative planting will disrupt some existing home group relationships. But all organic home group planting involves this relational sacrifice. We accept this as one of the few voluntary sufferings we can embrace in the cause of Christ. We do this so that others may experience the same kind of community which helped us to grow in Him. At the same time, we will maintain some key relationships in the new home group, and we can maintain other important peer friendships outside of home group.
- Combining with Christians from other home groups requires special work to build unity with them. The different home group pods will need to find ways to get to know each other *before* they plant. The new home group leadership team will need to prioritize building unity among themselves. We will ask one home group leader to take special responsibility to lead this process. The home group members will need to prioritize building unity among themselves. This may involve forming new cell groups, having a home group retreat within the first few months; etc.

Let’s be realistic about these sacrifices, and then willingly make them for Christ’s kingdom! We will not ultimately regret any sacrifice we make to build His church, because He will reward us for every sacrifice when He returns. And in the meantime, He will work through these sacrifices will strengthen our faith and love, to make our home groups healthier, and to help more people meet Christ and grow in Him!