

Christian Leadership 3 – Week 7

Leading Home Church Growth

I. General Conditions

When leading a new home church, your first order of business is to see that your group has what we defined in an [earlier paper](#) as "low end" work (that is, effective evangelism and follow-up). In my opinion, a group without evangelism and follow-up will not gain spiritual health no matter what other measures they take. When leaders try to improve the situation through reorganizations, fussing over details, or changes in meeting format, we refer to such work as "chrome polishing." Chrome polishing is when sailors busy themselves polishing the fixtures on a ship that is sinking from a big hole in the hull. They should be focused on fixing the hole and nothing else. So focus on low end work first unless you know you already have that. Study the papers, "[Leading Home Church Evangelism](#)" and [Leading Home Church Follow Up](#) to get ideas for enhancing low end work in your group.

We are also assuming that you have a relatively normal and healthy home church. If, on the other hand, the home church is exceptional in any of several ways, you may need a different approach to leadership than what we advance here.

II. A Plan of Action

Once these assumptions apply, you need a way to proceed, a vision for the future, and an overall plan the leaders can agree on. Such a plan should include the following:

1. It should provide structures for all the biblical [functions of the church](#) including evangelism (local and world), *koinonia*, worship, prayer, discipleship, and ministry to the poor.
2. People in your church should be able to discover and enhance their spiritual gifts, developing ministries at the maximum level of training and effectiveness. As leaders, you are responsible to equip your people for ministry, and to facilitate each member's effort to develop ministry. Signs of centrifugalism include people not having time to go to cell group or discipleship but actively involved in serving in the community.
3. Your church should prepare to reproduce itself. In order to replicate your church you will need to duplicate all aspects of a healthy Christian community. The planning for replication should begin *on the first week* of your new home church.

The basic theory underlying a home church plan of action comes from the passages referring to ". . . the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part. . . ." According to this verse, in an ideal situation, if any member in your church fails to develop ministry, that should be their decision, not the result of inadequate provision by the church.

A final consideration in the formation of an effective plan is prioritization. The limited ministry strength of the home church should be directed where it can do the most good. It should not be squandered on work that is unimportant or unlikely to succeed. Therefore, we need to not only say "yes" but "no" to ministry opportunities. Some jobs, of course, must be done even though they may seem neither important nor strategic.

III. Assessing Your Group

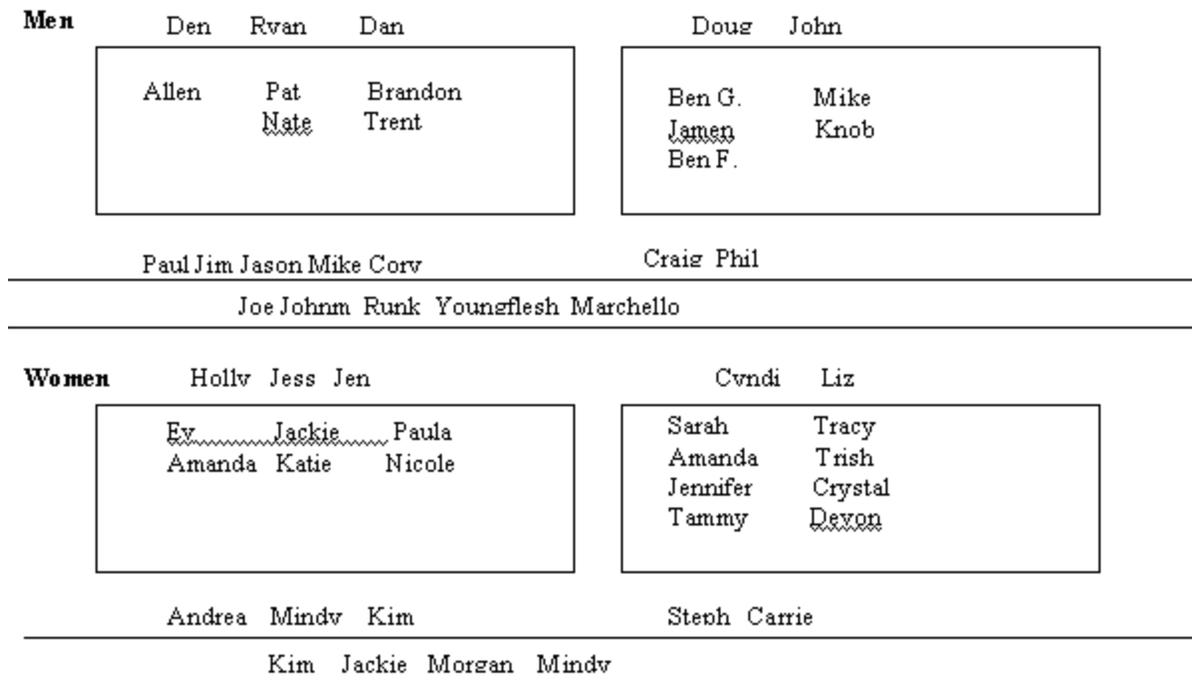
Before you can determine a direction for the church, you should arrive at a consensus regarding the overall state of the church in several different areas. In *Xenos*, you receive several helps in assessing your home church.

- A. From the office you can get "[4-part charts](#)" of your home church, or you can create your own. These are helpful diagnostic tools in determining your progress in several areas.
- B. To help the leaders develop such a consensus, see the paper "[Home Church Evaluation](#)". This paper asks needed questions in each area of the home church's ministry, and will help you think strategically about your group.
- C. In addition, each home church receives oversight calls from upper level leadership every month or two. The purpose of these calls is to review the thinking of the home church leaders in these areas, to make sure that you have a plan, and that your plan is realistic. The calls will help refresh your perspective on the group, so please cooperate. Try to have questions ready, so you can get the opinion of the experienced outsider on key issues you are facing. Staff helpers also try to visit every home church meeting once a year or more.

As can be seen in the "Home Church Evaluation" paper, the areas that need to be considered are:

1. Outreach and Follow up
2. Present Leadership
3. Quality of Body Life
4. Prayer
4. The Home Church Meeting Itself
5. Leadership Training
6. Giving

D. You should also define the present state of ministry in home church by drawing a ministry chart. A ministry chart is a tool that helps the leaders to visualize what is actually happening in the home church.



1. The boxes represent cell groups.
2. The names above the boxes are the leader(s) of the cell beneath their name.
3. The solid line beneath the cell boxes is for names of those who are not involved in cell groups, but who have attended home church twice or more. These are the people being reached by each cell, and are divided accordingly.
4. The second solid line beneath the cell boxes is the "deep fringe." This line contains names of those who have come to social events, or CT, or Home Church once, but not yet twice, or have not been assigned to a cell group for follow up. Use this line to keep track of outreach work.
5. If you draw a third line, it is for very deep fringe, or prospects. Names on this line are being witnessed to and prayed for, but have not yet attended anything. Churches with slow outreach should follow progress on this line.
6. Using this kind of ministry chart, it should be clear how the spheres of ministry are developing within the home church. Some people add lines connecting individuals to those they are discipling.
7. In the chart above, it seems clear the home church is approaching the time to plant a new home church. Already the group has four cell groups. These would be arranged on either side, in a way that makes the eventual church plant obvious. This kind of chart makes it easy to recognize the implications of marriages or other relational

bonds that may begin to contradict the way the ministry is developing. Don't wait until the plant to correct such contradictions.

IV. Individual Multiplication

The difference between merely warehousing people and true healthy home church growth is individual multiplication. At Xenos, we believe in fostering a true, self-replicating church planting movement. The basis of such a movement is personal discipleship resulting in the more mature members of the church delivering new leaders and role models who can lead a new home church. This is the goal Paul was referring to when he said, "And we proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, that we may present every man complete in Christ." Col. 1:28. We believe this is also what Christ called us to when he said to make disciples, "teaching them to do all that I commanded you." Mat. 28:19,20 We also see a direct connection with Paul's call on church leaders to equip the saints. Eph. 4:11ff

As leaders of a home group, your primary task is to oversee and facilitate this process of individual duplication, or discipleship. This does not mean you are responsible to do all discipling work in the home church yourselves, as we shall see.

In the home church leaders meeting, ask whether there are men and women who are truly advancing in a way that makes it likely that they will be able to take a leading role in the future.

1. It may be that each cell ministry has some in it who are not likely to fill this role anytime soon, or perhaps ever. At the same time, there should ideally be at least one or two in each cell who do look promising.
2. If there are no such people in a cell, you need to discuss how you are going to respond. The reason for the shortage should be determined, and suggestions made to correct it. It is usually not advisable to transfer someone from another cell in order to correct such a situation. Such a transfer could destroy God-ordained spheres of ministry. [As argued earlier](#), the church needs to know who are leaders appointed by God, and recognize them. If we artificially buttress people's ministry, we may create the illusion that a non-leader is a leader. Better solutions would be:
 - cell recombination
 - further perseverance in outreach
 - upgrade the composition of the weak cell through letting them follow-up on neutral guests, as explained below.
3. Along with outreach, individual duplication is the key priority of the home church. Without movement in this area no lasting growth can be expected. Each cell group should understand its mission in terms of duplication.

V. Cell Group Multiplication

If individual multiplication is occurring, it should eventually be possible to multiply cell groups also. When planning cell multiplication, be sure to keep the larger picture in view (i.e. eventual home church planting efforts), as well as the details of the particular personalities involved in each new cell.

Normally, the leaders of even a newly planted home church should begin almost immediately discussing potential cell group planting plans. This way, all the leaders understand how the others are thinking, and how that affects their own ministry. Well-led home churches should experience a minimum of disruption in relationships when planting a new home church. People should not have to transfer from one cell group to another at the time of the plant except in very rare cases.

To assist the leaders of cells in planning cell group multiplication, see the paper "[Ideas for Leading a Cell Group](#)." Whatever plan is used, try to keep back sufficient people when dividing a cell to avoid leaving the original leader(s) with no ministry. Both cells must be successful if the plant is to lead to home church replication. In home churches with singles, there may be ministry houses to consider as well. If your home church has ministry houses, try to arrange it so that each ministry house is matched to one cell group. However, planting cells and planting houses may happen at different times.

VI. Unincorporated People

By "unincorporated" we mean people who do not yet attend a cell group. These people appear on the solid line in a ministry chart.

The Home Church leaders should agree on who is responsible for long-term follow up of new people. Although the first person on the spot (at the home church meeting) may take care of *initial* follow up, there are good reasons for avoiding a "first come first serve" policy when it comes to *in-depth* follow up and incorporation. Such a policy might lead to ungodly competition in the case of perceived highly desirable new people.

Based on the available data, and the joint discernment of the leaders, select the most appropriate ministry action for each unincorporated person on the ministry chart. For most new people, it is reasonable to undertake to win them over to a lifestyle of involvement in the Body of Christ, and ultimately discipleship (Mt. 28:19). The person who brought the guest, and the cell group (s) associated with that person normally undertake this mission together.

In other cases we may have several reasons for not assigning any responsibility at all. Sometimes the workers are too busy or there is too little likelihood of success. This could apply, for instance, to some older members who are not interested in further involvement. In such cases, the wisest course is often to do nothing. God may bring such a person into a more responsive frame of mind at some later time in their Christian life, or there may be more opportunity later. Since we cannot meet all needs, the first people to wait on should be those who are not interested in, or responsive to, the input that has already been given. Such people could still be encouraged in a more general way by the home church as a whole.

The point in waiting is not to ostracize the person, but rather to avoid committing all of our limited resources to a ministry effort that is neither appreciated nor effective. Worse still, we might unintentionally find ourselves badgering someone who really wants to be left alone! Such badgering is not effective in bringing about willing obedience to God's will. On the other hand, challenging them periodically and praying for them regularly is appropriate.

Periodically reevaluate any case where this posture has been adopted. People in this position often begin showing signs of interest once it is clear that they are not going to be forced.

Some people think it's dangerous to have those who are not deeply involved present in the church (e.g. "Achan theology" or "Jonah theology" where the presence of uncommitted people may ruin the group). This notion is a discredited idea and is off-target ministry-wise. It is more accurate to say that *positive outreach and discipleship will result in home church health*. We don't need to worry about casual observers unless they begin to make up the *majority* of the church. If the consensus of your group begins to form in the direction of low commitment, it could endanger the home church. This is precisely why we've urged the recent years' reforms of higher commitment in Christian community and discipleship.

After a plan of ministry is chosen for every unincorporated person in the Home Church, the next step is to find workers or leaders who can do the job. If the person in question is to be won, choose a worker or leader who would be well suited to accomplish the task. This can be determined by considering the following factors:

The person who brought a new member to the home church should have the first opportunity to disciple that member (see II Cor. 10:13-16; II Tim. 2:6). NOTE: It is very dangerous and wrong to nullify the principle of allowing the outreach worker to work with the new person without just cause. The effect can be loss of motivation in the work force, distrust of leaders, division, and faulty leadership selection.

Exceptions to this rule of thumb would be:

1. Cases where the original outreach worker is of the opposite sex. We have had nothing but trouble from efforts to do cross-gender discipleship. The only exception here might be situations where the discipler is elderly. Also, in cases of cross-gender outreach, candidates to follow the person up should normally be limited to members of the cell group directly related to the bringer's group. In other words, when a new home church is planted, they should normally end up in the same home church.
2. Cases where the original outreach worker is too young in the Lord to have a teaching ministry, (although in this case he/she should be invited to help disciple the new one in a cell group). Remember, in the early church, people commonly became leaders during their first year in the Lord. Avoid over-qualifying people for ministry! Of course you might be able to do a better job, but ministry is a powerful

motivation for growth. Because ministry is a means of growth, it will help immature members to overcome sin problems that may hold them back otherwise. If the bar is too high for getting involved in ministry, the morale in your group will suffer.

3. Cases where the outreaching one has character flaws so serious that they absolutely disqualify him/her from Christian work. These flaws should be objective, serious, and recent. Again, remember that ministry is a means of growth, and people may need responsibility to help them overcome their bad habits.
4. When the outreacher doesn't want to disciple the new person, or fails to do so even after repeated reminders. New people should not have to pay the price for sins of omission committed by our established members. A warning is usually in order before by-passing such an ommitter.
5. When the new person refuses to accept the leadership of the one who brought him/her, then this principle may also be nullified. However, every effort should be made to persuade the new one to follow the outreacher. The leadership should discuss and reach consensus on why the refusal happened, and whether it points to deeper problems. In some cases, these refusals are relatively unimportant, reflecting nothing more than sibling rivalry or similar jealousies from earlier days.
6. In rare cases where one cell group has been overwhelmed with new people because of a powerful evangelist or a people movement, they may plead for help from other cells. This should be the decision of the overwhelmed group, not a move that is imposed on them. The norm should be that even large numbers won in such situations remain in the same cells together.
7. In student groups, incoming students from younger ministries (high school to college, etc.) are often unconnected, but not if workers in the older group were responsible for recruiting the new members (e.g. a college member has been working with the high-school student in a college-led high school group).
8. Transfers from other Xenos home churches, or referrals from Home Group Connection are typically available to all.
9. Those leaders or workers who have a proven record of delivering competent, devoted home church leaders should be allowed to work with some promising young believers if possible. This is because they are most likely to succeed in delivering more leaders. Other workers should also be given opportunities. In some cases, the older worker may come alongside to help a younger discipler, but not to replace him/her.
10. Follow the principle of "finishing old business before going on to new." We should resist the tendency of some leaders and workers to jump from person to person. The questions should be asked, "What valid reason can be given for quitting work with your present disciple?" or, "Is there clear reason to think you will be able to do a good job with your present ministry as well as the new person?"
11. In cases where workers plead they need someone new to work with because they have failed with their former person, the following questions should be resolved.
 - What lessons were learned?
 - Was the failure legitimate, or the result of negligence, over-aggressiveness, or other errors?
 - Note the tendency of some workers to attribute failures to the fact that the new person was "a bad apple." This is a suspicious answer, which can almost always be said in the case of lost people. Only in cases where the leadership agree by consensus that nothing more could have been done should we accept this tempting answer.

These issues should be discussed at the home church leaders' meeting before a neutral first timer is given into the care of the one who failed. Be merciful, but firm in these discussions.

The worker's past record should be taken into account. If there is a pattern of failure, other workers should be given a chance before the troubled worker is given yet another chance. In the meantime, he/she should be counseled about ministry and encouraged to evangelize.

Since any assignment to follow someone up will be respected from that time on, and will not likely be changed in the future, these are rather big decisions. The leaders have to balance the need for confidence in a worker, with the

need to take chances in ministry. There are no exact guidelines for making this judgment. Try to act in a way consistent with workers' characters, availability of new people, urgency of the need, and fairness to all members in the home church. In questionable situations, seek advice from your supervisor.

VII. Leadership Development

- A. **Discern future leaders.** There should be a building consensus of who the future leaders are, and what their capabilities will be, and leaders should begin discussing possibilities and praying about them at the beginning of a new home church. Leaders should also be frank on their misgivings about prospective leaders. These issues involve perception and interpretation, so leaders will often disagree. By discussion, prayer, and gathering evidence over a period of time, the team should be able to move toward consensus. Again, if the team is having trouble agreeing, get outside help from your supervisor.
- B. **Provide a training program** by top qualified leaders. This should be a combination of discipleship, cell group topics, and core classes. Be sure to include supervised ministry experience in your training program. The areas of thought raised in the paper "[A Cell Group Ministry Model](#)" in Section VII, "Content," should be evaluated periodically. Also, study the more detailed paper, "[Goals for Personal Discipleship](#)" as it relates to the lives of key upcoming leaders. Read through [Organic Disciplemaking](#) by McCallum and Lowery thinking about your disciples. Leaders should be prepared to satisfy the other leaders that those in their care are being properly trained and cared for. While no new leader will meet all the criteria as described, try to see some progress in each area.
- C. Steps to take with disciples who advance well:
1. The first step is to make sure these people are developing healthy spiritual habits (like prayer and personal time with God and his word), working at outreach, and succeed in establishing their own discipling ministry.
 2. Be sure they understand and are progressing on the other requirements for leadership, especially core classes and [Fiscal Support Team](#) membership. Although they can become leaders before servant team members, they must complete all requirements within three years of becoming leaders.
 3. When you gain substantial confidence that disciples are headed for home church leadership, invite them to "sit in" on the leader's meeting. By sitting in on the leader's meeting, workers have the opportunity to see how leaders behave, think, and work. **Remember:** Don't ask someone to begin sitting in leaders' meeting unless you are fairly certain the person will progress to leadership. Try to avoid the situation where you have to ask someone to leave the leaders' meeting.
- D. Try to predict and plan the next attempt at Home Church planting well in advance (week 9). See the [literature that has been written](#) to assist leaders in thinking through this very difficult question. It may be necessary to hold one or more meetings with the leaders alone (without leader trainees) in order to discuss plans frankly, including the progress of the leader trainees. This question should also be taken up with your staff supervisor, since sphere oversight needs to agree with your plan.
- E. **Train new teachers.** Not all leaders are necessarily suited to be teachers, nor do all teachers have to be leaders. Timing becomes an issue in this area. If we wait too long, new teachers will not receive adequate experience before a plant is attempted. If we place new teachers before the home church too early, or too often, it could harm the home church's growth. Record teachings and urge the new teacher to listen to his/her own teaching. Stress learning to lead quality discussions. The class "[Leading Discussion](#)" is helpful. Leaders should be willing to give oral and/or written feedback on teachings.

VIII. Leadership Maintenance

See the paper, "[Leadership Team Building](#)" for a detailed discussion of how to enhance your teams' unity and cohesiveness.

Don't make the mistake of overlooking this area! Your home church will be blocked by the enemy if you fail to build a cohesive team.