

2006 Xenos Summer Institute
Leading Evangelism in Home Groups

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PLEASE TRY TO READ BEFORE THE WORKSHOP BEGINS

From: Martin Robinson and Dwight Smith, "Invading Secular Space" (Grand Rapids: Monarch Books, 2003), pp. 32, 33

Abandoning the Collection and Amusement Impulse

The implied priority behind the question "How can I get my church bigger?" is the notion that the key issue is how to collect and amuse a congregation. All too often, programmes are seen as assisting ministers to collect a congregation and keep them amused rather than as a primary tool of mission.

Another way of thinking about our people is to stop seeing them as programme participants and start seeing them as activists who are yet to be mobilised and trained. Igniting movements happens primarily through the Christians we mobilise in their spheres of influence. Programmes can become useful tools to strengthen and enhance movement making but training our people to be effective in the marketplace or other primary social circles is more important than persuading them to participate in programmes.

Think about the youth in your church. Ask the question, is it better to have great programmes at church that we hope will be attractive to youth in the area or is it better to envision the youth we do know so that they can influence their friends and ignite a movement? Of course once we have understood the primary importance of mobilising and training our people, then programmes can take their proper place. Programmes are great tools in the hands of mobilised people but they do not have the same impact or value without that primary training and envisioning.

Introduction

Define “leading evangelism”

Definition: *Influencing other Christians to **willingly** and **actively** participate in personal evangelism, motivated by **God’s grace**.*

Being leaders of home group evangelism is NOT

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Generating & maintaining evangelism: Paul’s example

- Paul’s 3 missionary journeys
- Paul’s instruction to Timothy:
2 Timothy 2:² And the things which **you** have heard from **me** in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to **faithful men**, who will be able to teach **others** also.

...he was doing nothing but what the Lord prescribed for the church in the Great Commission of Matthew 28.

Discipleship is the engine that drives evangelism!

Therefore “leading evangelism” in the home group: always includes us personally investing in the spiritual growth of Christians to help them *develop* and *maintain* a healthy evangelistic lifestyle and verbal witness.

PRINCIPLES IN LEADING HOME GROUP EVANGELISM

1. **Home group leaders need to “win” the home group to God’s perspective of the mission of the church.**

Consensus

What is the home group leader’s role in helping home group members acquire God’s purpose for the home group?

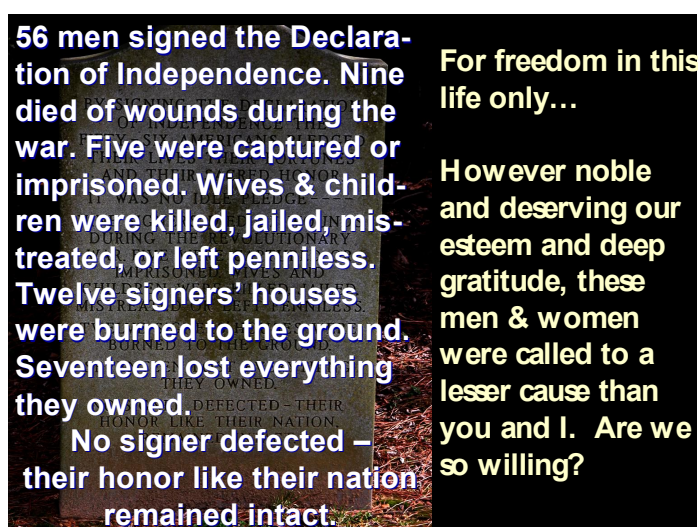
Two general ways we develop consensus (the 6 principles that follow these will also each contribute to reminding Christians in our home group what the mission is).

a)

- **God's purpose for the church is to reach the lost & disciple the saved** - using every member of His body for this (pastor & members) for this purpose. (Matthew 28:18-20; 1 Pet. 2:9; 2 Cor. 5; Acts; 1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9, etc.).

Not a support group focus – will be qualified in 6th point

- **God says this is the only road to ultimate fulfillment in this life.** (Lk. 9:24; Jn 4:34; lesson taught the disciples by the 12 baskets left after the feeding of the 5,000, Jn. 12:1-8; 24-26; 13:1-17)



b)

To protect yourself from being legalistic:

Remember:

- **Consensus for evangelism is not _____ and has considerable _____.**
- **It is ultimately God who gels the group around His purpose for the church.**

2. Home group leaders must facilitate members building ongoing relationships with Christians & non-Christians outside of the meeting structures.

Are Christians investing personal time – outside of any planned church meetings –
vs. “meeting mentality”

What does this personal investment look like?

“must hear” workshop on this: Gary DeLashmutt’s “Go Groups” – get on CD – he presented this earlier today.

How do you make a Christian invest regularly in the lost or a younger Christian? You can’t.

Colossians 4:⁵ Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity.

Ephesians 5:¹⁵ Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men, but as wise, ¹⁶ making the most of your time, because the days are evil.

3. Home Group leaders need to equip their members to do evangelism

To be effective evangelists includes acquiring at least these two capabilities:

- a. Effective evangelists have learned how to incorporate ongoing relationship building into their already busy schedules.

[see: Balancing Home & Church Ministries: www.xenos.org/essays/balancing_min.htm]

- b. Effective evangelists are always in the process of becoming more effective communicators of the Gospel and defenders of the faith.

1 Peter 3:¹⁵ but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always *being* ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence...

Qualification:

4. Home Group Leaders must *lead* evangelism *by doing* evangelism

How important is this owning and modeling of evangelistic values by church leaders? It’s everything. Unless you first catch God’s concern for those outside his family, you may as well ignore the rest of the ideas in this book. Why? Because without a heart that beats fast for lost people, you won’t have the foundation or spiritual resources needed to sustain evangelistic programs and ministries.

But if we grow bigger and bigger hearts for those who don’t know Christ, and if we increasingly model his bold example of being a “friend of sinners,” then those around us will take their cues from us. They too will begin to take strategic relational risks for the sake of the gospel.ⁱ

Side note: If we are paid staff at a church or Christian organization...

Home Group Consultants:

[John Cleary's workshop outlines some of our philosophy & practices in home group oversight].

5. Home Group leaders must plan for planting a new group from the beginning.

Will help in three critical ways:

- 1st, it helps to prepare the workers
- 2nd, it is a constant reminder of *the purpose* of the group
- 3rd, it enables you to figure out what is still missing and must be developed, before planting.

Ministry chart: lines of discipling relationships usually based on who reached out to the person to begin with.

As God guides the leaders in the direction of the plant, here are some ways to enhance the evangelism & planting ethos in a home group:

- Teach the biblical principles of growth & multiplication in your equipping venues.
- Pray OUT LOUD that the Lord raises up new leaders & workers.
- Communicate a vision of leadership to those who are moving forward in their walk → but like the New Testament, place heavy emphasis on character, not just ministry fruit.
- Hold at least quarterly workers meetings to edify and support the group's efforts and communicate the progress of the group toward the plant.
- Always make a BIG-DEAL ABOUT OUTREACH EFFORTS/ SALVATIONS – God does!
- Your home group leaders meetings (ours are monthly) should focus more on topics that revolve around growth and planting than resolving the sin problems in the members' lives.

If there is no tangible goal being set, communicated and acted upon, then there will be no goal met.

6. Home group leaders must stay forward- thinking and forward moving even when pressed with legitimate distractions from the main mission.

Counseling Issues

Sin

Dissent from members of the group re: group logistic or direction issues

Guidelines to help stay on track:

- Teach, discuss, model God's heart and purpose for the church
- Home group leaders must be willing to be unpopular if their decisions to stay focused on the mission upset some people.ⁱⁱ
- Continue home group outreach events regardless of other pressing needs.
- Regularly focus discussions on outreach (in believer-only settings, discipling times, etc.)
- Leaders meeting agendas focus on the purpose (cover it first)
- Train your home group leaders to do basic biblical counseling.
- Train your home group leaders to manage conflict.

7. Home Group Structures must put non-Christians at ease

Is the structure, atmosphere, and teaching of my home group, or our church's home groups, more tuned to edifying the believer or to putting the non-believer at ease?

Here are some structural considerations that might help:

- General atmosphere
- Food
- Comfortable temperature

- Sharing/teaching – non-Christianese
- Workers all committed to staying well after the teaching to relate with guests and newer folk.
- Other-centered fellowship
- No clean-up until after all new people are gone.
- Logistics that consider your “field”.

Q/A?

ⁱ Mittelberg, Mark, “Building a Contagious Church” (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000) p. 92.

ⁱⁱ Excerpt from Gary DeLashmutt’s 2002 Servant Team Retreat teaching:
“What does it mean to “follow the Lord fully?” From this text, we can distill three key features.

1. It involves being willing to trust God's promises by obeying his commands--even when no one else wants do this.

Caleb did this with Joshua at Kadesh-Barnea with regard to invading the land (14:7,8). While everyone else focused on the problems and obstacles, Caleb consciously compared them to God's power and faithfulness and called on the Israelites to invade (Num. 13:30).

And he is doing it again here with regard to finishing the conquest. While everyone else is capitulating to personal peace and affluence, Caleb is saying, "Let's get on with it! I don't care if no one else wants to possess their possessions--I'm going to possess mine!" (Joshua says the same thing at the end of his life in 24:15.)

This is one of the key differences between being a transactional leader and a transformational leader. Transactional leaders take their cue from the rest of the people and lower the bar; transformational leaders take their cue from God and raise the bar and call people to prove God's faithfulness by rising to it.

Are you a transformational leader? Are you willing to be create tension in your home group over key ministry issues (e.g., evangelism; discipleship; planting)? Are you willing to confront and enact church discipline over key moral issues (wrongful divorce; sexual immorality)?”