

# Developing and Using Small Groups

by Linda Hardin, DMin. excerpts from Building Church Leaders.com

The implementation of small groups is one factor in the growth of some churches. Church growth experts say small groups are an important factor for growth, whatever the church attendance. Beginning small groups requires much work, time, prayer, and a vision.

Reasons for Small Groups:

**1. They provide another entry point into your church.** In the past, Sunday school, worship services, and special events served as entry points. While these still offer opportunities, we must continue to search for ways to increase the opportunities people have to become involved in our churches. For a variety of reasons, some people are intimidated by walking into a crowd. They feel more comfortable with a smaller group. Others prefer the anonymity of a large group.

**2. They are an effective evangelism tool.** Small groups offer a place to discuss daily life and to receive encouragement and support. They provide a setting where questions are easier to ask, helping non-believers and new believers to learn more about the Christian lifestyle.

**3. They are an effective means to care for the people.** Whatever the size of your church, it is impossible for the pastor to provide all the care people need. We already practice this through a variety of ministries. Additionally, some will find it easier to talk with a church member, especially if they are new to the church or don't know the pastor.

**4. They accelerate spiritual growth within the people.** In a small group, usually 8–12, people are more comfortable in sharing needs and concerns. This leads to accountability and an atmosphere that nurtures growth.

**5. They shift the work of the church to the people.** Ephesians 4:12 talks about "equipping the saints to do the work of the ministry." As Christians, we are saints, whether or not we are comfortable with the term. The early church demonstrated how empowering lay leaders accomplished the work of the church. Community people expect the pastor to be involved in ministry. When the laity, however, takes this role, the impact is greater.

Dale Galloway, pastor of New Hope Community Church in Portland states "No church with more than 50 members can be effective in pastoral care without enlisting and enabling the lay people to do daily work of pastoral care."

Needs of People Today:

According to a Gallup poll, there are six needs people have today:

1. To believe life is meaningful and has purpose
2. To have a sense of community and deeper relationships
3. To be appreciated and respected
4. To be listened to and heard
5. To feel that one is growing in faith
6. To have practical help in developing a mature faith

It is easy to see how small groups provide a means of meeting these needs.

