

CHAPTER 7

Restoring the mission of the church small group

In the current Western church environment it is rarely recognised that the mission of God's Church is also the mission of the church small group. It is certainly true that church small groups serve a few purposes. For example they are also places of care and of learning. However, the fact remains that the mission of the Church is the mission of the church small group!

This begs a question. How might we *reinsert* the mission of the church small group into the church small group without overriding other good things? We would need to change something in the way we think about the role of the church small group!

Here are some leadership habits for church small groups – to restore a focus on outreach, while leveraging the naturally relational dynamic of these groups.

Habit 1: Establish the goal (annually)

Having a goal motivates action. E.g. At the start of each year have every small group member (i) list the names of five friends they'd like to encourage toward faith. Next to each name (ii) write out possible hindrances to faith and (iii) interests they have. Use the hindrances for prayer and possible conversations. Interests highlight possible connection points – both individually and for the small group together.

Habit 2: Pray (monthly)

On the first week of every month, pause for 2 or 3 minutes in your small group meeting to pray for your five people.

Habit 3: Testimony about Christian witness (monthly)

On the third week of every month ask if anyone has had an opportunity to initiate a spiritual conversation recently. This habit will remind people of their mission – while the testimony also encourages. Outreach skills previously taught could then be reiterated.

Habit 4: One or two socials per term (Quarterly)

By noting the interests of your group members' 'five', a group leader with 10 members would have the interests of 50 friends listed. Twice per term plan a social activity, based around common interests. This creates 'bridging events', to which new friends can be invited into a relational and relaxed environment. Conversations would naturally arise out of this in time.

Habit 5: Revision before major church outreach events or services (twice-annually)

In the weeks prior to a regular church outreach (E.g. Easter or Christmas) intentionally give ten minutes weekly to

- (i) revising a conversational or gospel skill
- (ii) planning a social for yourselves together and
- (iii) praying for your five friends – who you could invite to your upcoming church event, service or programme.

To make the point, the above monthly and annual habits would establish an outreaching CULTURE in a group. It is possible to reinsert the mission of the church small group into the church small group. What if we were to become intentional in the equipping and ongoing encouragement of our leaders to do this?

Resources:

- **Web:** AllTogether.co.nz/small-groups
- **Book:** *Elephant in the Room* – download PDF (or purchase a hardcopy) via AllTogether.co.nz/ebooks
- **Courses:** While various possible discussion resources exist on the topic, until we've embraced leadership habits that can inculcate our desired values, longer-term change will not be catalysed.

