

Small Group Training – Week 4

Releasing Responsibility

Eccl 4:9 "Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work."

Num 11:14 "I cannot carry all these people by myself; the burden is too heavy for me."

Once a co-leader has been selected for the small group, it is very important that he or she be given something to do in that role. Being a co-leader in a small group should not be an empty title, nor should the sole function of the co-leader be that of teaching a lesson should the leader be unable to attend. The whole purpose of having a co-leader is to have someone to help carry the load of leading a small group on a consistent basis.

There are many reasons that a small group leader might be hesitant to give a co-leader some of the responsibilities of the group. The group leader may feel as though it would be inconveniencing the co-leader by asking for help. It could be that the leader doesn't think about giving work to the co-leader because he or she has been doing everything for so long that it is part of the normal routine. Or, it could be a matter of pride, the "I don't need help" or "I can do it better" attitude. Whatever the excuse, it is an issue the leader needs to overcome.

Throughout Scripture there are examples of teamwork in doing ministry. In both the Old and New Testaments we can see leaders partnering with another to accomplish the work of growing the kingdom of God. There were Moses and Joshua, Elijah and Elisha and Paul and Barnabas to name a few. Not to mention the fact that Jesus sent His disciples out in pairs to do ministry.

So, now that we have a good basis for sharing the work load of a small group, how do we flesh it out? Perhaps a good starting point would be to meet with the co-leader face to face and discuss the different functions that it takes to make a small group an effective and efficient ministry. Bring a detailed list of the different responsibilities that you as a leader are carrying on your own (or with your spouse). You may want to put the list into two columns, one that you feel you do well and enjoy doing (those jobs that line up with how God has gifted you to serve in the body). In the other column list the jobs that you do because they have to be done (those that you are not spiritually gifted to perform).

Discuss with the co-leader his or her spiritual gifts are. Ask which of the duties on your "weak" list the co-leader feels he or she would be able to do *and* would enjoy doing. Don't just dump on the co-leader those things you don't like to do, remember we are trying to match up tasks with spiritual gifts.

After going through the "weak" list the leader should then go over the list of duties that are his or her strengths. Now, this is where it may be tough; ask if there are any of these tasks which the co-leader believes are a good match to his or her spiritual gifts. I say that this part may be tough because giving up part of the role which we do well and enjoy doing is not easy. But remember, we are looking at what is going to benefit the health of small group and enhance the ministry of both the leader and co-leader.

Once the leader and co-leader have discussed the list of duties and strengths and weaknesses it is time to decide who will do what. At this point it is important to remember that both the leader and the co-leader will end up with some duties that are not in their

strengths category. The idea here is to maximize each other's ministry strengths while minimizing the ministry weaknesses.

After this process there are three things that the leader can do to really build up the co-leader in his or her new role:

ENTRUST the co-leader with his or her duties. Let the co-leader know that you have faith in his or her abilities to do the job by allowing the co-leader to do it in their own way. Remember that God has created you both different, so you won't do things the same way. Different is not wrong, it is just different.

ENABLE the co-leader to do the job well. Be willing to help the co-leader when help is needed. Provide resources that he or she can use to grow. Allow for mistakes, and help the co-leader learn from those mistakes. Most of all hold your co-leader up in prayer faithfully.

ENCOURAGE the co-leader both privately and before the small group. Work at acknowledging a job well done and don't be afraid to say thank you. Even when you might need to help the co-leader recognize a mistake or problem, do it in a positive manner. Begin by acknowledging the things that the co-leader is doing right before addressing the thing done wrong. (This is the model set forth by Jesus as He addressed the seven churches in Revelation chapters two and three).

One final thought; we briefly mentioned considered the leader co-leader teams in the Bible, Moses and Joshua, Elijah and Elisha and Paul and Barnabas. In each of these ministry relationships one thread runs through them all. In each case the leader was ultimately preparing the co-leader to one day be a leader. As you build up your co-leader keep in mind that the goal in most cases should be for the co-leader to eventually lead his or her own small group. This is how the small group ministry grows. This is how we multiply.

Blessings in Christ
Rick