

# Growing A Church Through Small Groups: A Biblical and Practical Guide for Facilitators

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Small group ministries are the lifeblood of a thriving church. They foster deep relationships, encourage spiritual growth, and provide a support system for believers. However...

*When groups grow comfortable relationally, they can resist change, slowing the church's mission.*

This whitepaper will outline the biblical foundation for growth, address common challenges, and provide practical steps for facilitators to cultivate a culture of multiplication.

## 2. THE BIBLICAL MANDATE FOR GROWTH

### The Great Commission

Jesus commands us in Matthew 28:19-20:

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations...”

The very essence of discipleship is growth. We are called not just to gather but also to expand God’s kingdom. How?

*Divide and conquer.*

*When groups get too large, they lose intimacy. Also, the quality of ministry time diminishes because there is less time to pray over everyone’s needs, for people to share, for people to be discipled, etc.*

### Acts 2:46-47: The Early Church Model

“And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.”

Growth was a hallmark of the early church. Their commitment to meeting in homes and fellowshiping resulted in continuous expansion.

*The early church exploded! They didn’t just meet at the temple; they also met at homes. And many hundreds of home owners needed to open their homes to new Christians.*

*NVC has new people who need to be assimilated into groups. If your group has less than 8 people, invite people at church to visit your group!*

## **Multiplication, Not Just Addition**

2 Timothy 2:2 emphasizes multiplication:

“And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.”

*Who in your group are you entrusting, or training up, to lead a new group next semester?*

### **3. WHY GROWTH MATTERS: THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH**

- **People Need Jesus:** Small groups serve as a front door for new believers.
  - As of our winter semester of 2025, we have eight front doors. Invite your neighbors/friends to the group!
- **Healthy Things Grow:** Just as living organisms grow, a healthy church must continually reproduce (John 15:5).

Yet, here's the deal...

- We need to STIMULATE growth.
- **More Facilitators = More Impact:** The more facilitators raised, the greater the church's reach.
  - Some churches say, “If they can read, they can lead.” I disagree. Rather, I say that this bar is too low. Facilitators also need to live lives pleasing to God. *Yet, they don't need to have it all together!*

## 4. OVERCOMING RESISTANCE TO GROWTH

### The Comfort of Familiarity

People naturally resist change, especially when friendships deepen.

However, leaders must cast vision, showing that multiplying groups doesn't mean losing friendships but expanding the family.

Below are some bullet points to overcome this:

- **Encourage the group to adopt this critical missional mindset.** It's not about us. Rather, it's about offering opportunities for more lives to be transformed by the Gospel.
- **Communicate that multiplication strengthens the body of Christ.** New groups allow more people to be included and grow in faith.
- **Highlight the biblical example of growth.** Remind members that the early church expanded through continual multiplication (Acts 2:46-47).
- **Reassure members that friendships can continue.** Just because a group multiplies doesn't mean relationships must end; they can continue outside of structured meetings.
- **Use testimonies to show the benefits of multiplication.** Hearing from those who have successfully transitioned into new groups can alleviate fears and concerns.

### Fear of Facilitatorship

Many potential facilitators hesitate due to perceived inadequacy. Exodus 4:10-12 reminds us that God equips those He calls.

- I have someone I will be surprising at one of the growth groups. She probably feels inadequate in taking on the role of a facilitator, yet I will be encouraging her to take it on.
  - FIRST... I will do while she observes. SECOND... I will observe while she does. THIRD... I will no longer observe while she does. (I'll not show up for one of the meetings.)

### **Shifting the Mindset from 'Us' to 'Them'**

Facilitators must instill a missional outlook. Philippians 2:4 challenges us to consider others' relational and spiritual needs over our own comfort.

*<sup>4</sup> not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. – Phil 2:4*

## **5. RAISING UP NEW FACILITATORS: A KEY TO EXPANSION**

### **Identifying Potential Facilitators**

Who in your group...

- Is faithful? (Luke 16:10)
- Has a teachable spirit? (Proverbs 9:9)
- Has a heart for others? (1 Peter 5:2-3)

### **Mentorship and Training**

Jesus modeled facilitatorship development (Mark 3:14). Facilitators should:

1. Identify a co-facilitator.
2. Gradually delegate responsibilities.

3. Provide encouragement and accountability.

### **Practical Steps for Facilitators to Encourage Growth**

1. Cast Vision Constantly – Share the “why” of multiplication often.
2. Celebrate Growth Stories – Testimonies reinforce the value of expansion.
3. Plan for Multiplication from Day One – Normalize group expansion as part of the culture.
4. Develop a Facilitatorship Pipeline – Ensure new facilitators are always being raised up.

### **6. RELATIONAL DYNAMICS AND HOW TO NAVIGATE THEM**

- **Helping Members Process Separation:** Acknowledge emotions while affirming the greater mission.
- **Encouraging Ongoing Friendships:** Teach that friendships don't end when groups multiply.
- **Managing Conflict:** Equip facilitators with biblical conflict resolution skills (Matthew 18:15-17).

### **7. THE ROLE OF SMALL GROUPS IN CHURCH GROWTH**

A vibrant small group ministry:

- Provides discipleship (Colossians 1:28).
- Increases retention (Hebrews 10:24-25).
- Expands outreach (Luke 10:1-2).

## 8. CONCLUSION

For a church to grow, its small groups MUST grow.

This requires a mindset shift—from comfort to mission, from stagnation to multiplication. By embracing biblical principles, raising up facilitators, and navigating relational challenges, your small group can become a dynamic force for God’s kingdom.

Any questions? Need anything? Don’t hesitate to call/text the church office.