

A CHURCH OF SMALL GROUPS:
Seeking to Create The Biblical Community
Jesus Prayed for

by

Andrew M. Thomas

A project submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirement for the degree of

MASTER OF DIVINITY

Andersonville Theological Seminary

2006

Approved by
James L. Hayes

March 21, 2006

Andersonville Theological Seminary

Abstract

A CHURCH OF SMALL GROUPS:
SEEKING TO CREATE THE BIBLICAL COMMUNITY
JESUS PRAYED FOR

by

Andrew M. Thomas

Chairperson of the Academic Review Committee: Professor James L. Hayes
Department of Research

This project is to expose the needs of the biblically-based community Jesus Christ prayed for His church to experience as recorded in the Gospel of John chapter 17 and other passages throughout the New Testament. This project will help the reader to understand the “dream” that Christ has for His church, the great need Christians have for community within the church, the problems faced by the church due to the lack of this type of biblically-based, Christ-centered community as expressed in small groups, and it will seek to explore solutions that might be applied to various contexts within the Body of Christ today.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to thank my family, and especially my wife. I could not have accomplished this thesis without their support, especially my wife's support. My wife put up with my cave experience in the wilderness for quite a long time. I also wish to thank Darla (*trees full of hawks*) Collins, proof reader *extraordinaire*. There are many others, whom I would wish to thank, but if I missed one, I am sure that there would be a "hit" put out on my life (just kidding). The One I wish to thank the most, though, is my LORD and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave me Eternal New Life and has allowed me to experience His kind of community, which I long for more and more. I long for Him, to experience Him in a deeper way every day and to help others discover that kind of love that only He can give.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter:

- 1. “In the Beginning God created...” Community!!!** pg. 1
This chapter explores the nature of God and mankind and helps to form some of the foundation for biblically-based small group community.

- 2. “Got Small Groups?”** pg. 9
This chapter explores the heart and nature of Christ’s Dream for community. In this chapter, the study explores the size and limits of the “span of care” and how these limits guide the size of small groups that can actually create the kind of community Christ wanted His church to experience.

- 3. “What happened to my other wing? I can barely fly in a circle...”**..... pg. 17
This chapter explores how the early church was experiencing Christ’s dream of community and its later demise and rekindling. This chapter will explore some of the history of the church and see how the Dark Ages and the Industrial Age affected the modern church. The church needs both “wings” to fly.

- 4. “What shape is your small group?”**..... pg. 30
This chapter explores the challenges that faced the church as it came out of the Industrial Revolution and how some pioneers helped to rediscover and implement small groups in the Body of Christ again as the normal way of Christian living. This chapter will explore various models of small groups.

- 5. The Final Frontier or The New Frontier**..... pg. 46
This chapter seeks to apply what this study has discovered and to find the best blend of models to develop a church small group system that is healthy for the Body of Christ.

Chapter 1

“In the Beginning God created ...” Community !!!

“In the beginning God...” is how the Bible starts. God’s existence is taken for granted by the writers of the Bible. To these writers, God is the creator, the only true God and all creation owes its existence and preservation to Him. *Who, what and how God is...*, is the perfect place to start in this study of small groups in the Body of Christ.

Before this study starts with the beginning of our physical universe and its “look” at God, I want to look at “my beginnings” just for a moment. Then I will go back to the “original” beginnings. In the “beginning” of my walk with my Lord Jesus Christ, I observed much in the church. I was just born as a *thinker*. I pondered many things, just as Mary, the mother of Jesus, did (see Luke 2:19). I observed the churches that I was growing up in and the churches I experienced after I was saved. I noticed that in my intense, insatiable study of God’s Word and comparing what I saw in Scripture with what I was observing in “reality” in church, that there was something missing. As I discussed this with others in my church and with other believers that were from other churches, we all agreed that there just seemed to be something missing. In this process, we formed a small group. It became the first biblically-based accountability-support-fellowship group that any of us were ever a part of. It was just like discovering the lost city of *Shangri-La*. We had stumbled upon something that was worth more than all the treasures of all the earth. Of course, I mean that this was subordinate to our

New-Life and Salvation in Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior. What I mean is that, this new discovery was a part of discovering how to **BE** the church according to what we were reading in the Holy Bible.

That is the Way God IS

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, and then on the last day, He created man. It is interesting to note that when God was explaining His thoughts and actions on the subject, He uses plural personal pronouns. He uses the plural pronouns of *Us* and *Our*. God inspired Moses to use a word for *God*, which in the Hebrew language is *Elohim*. This word is the plural form *El*. This plural form (Elohim) normally conveys the meaning of “*gods*” depending on its context. Although the Bible is very clear that the God of the Bible, is the one creator of the physical universe, He is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and He is the one, true and living God, He uses this plural word, Elohim, to express something about Himself. In Genesis 1:26-30, the Bible says the following:

And God said, “Let **Us** make man in **Our** image, after **Our** likeness: and let **them** have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.” ^[27] So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He **them**. ^[28] And God blessed them, and God said unto them, “Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.” ^[29] And God said, “Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat. ^[30] And to every beast of the earth,

and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so.”
(emphasis mine)

In this famous passage, God says, “Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness: and let them...” As the reader will notice, God (Elohim) is having a conversation within Himself, and He uses the plural personal pronouns, translated into English as *Us* and *Our*. In this passage, when He speaks of “man,” He uses the word “them” to express “man,” whom we find out are “male and female.” In this passage and other passages ¹, it is noted that sometimes God refers to Himself as *Us*. We have all heard the saying, “two’s company and three’s a crowd.” A better way to explain this would be: “two’s company and three’s community.” It is interesting that Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, in His conversation with Nicodemus in the Gospel of John 3:1-21, uses the words “We” and “Our” in verse 11: “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, **We** speak that **We** do know, and testify that **We** have seen; and ye receive not **Our** witness.” In the overall context of verses 10-13, Jesus is clearly speaking of Himself prior to His incarnation and explains what He had witnessed in Heaven, personally. He uses the words *We* and *Our*, in a very similar way as God (Elohim) does in those Genesis verses we have already seen above. God, therefore, reveals Himself as unity in plurality, One God who is Three Divine Persons in unity and community. God experiences **community** in the very essence of His being.

We Were Designed for Community

The data presented about *who*, *what*, and *how* God IS, clearly shows that God is plurality in unity, community. The data also shows that God created and designed mankind, as seen in Genesis chapters 1 and 2, to experience community with God and with each other. In Genesis 2:4-25, the LORD God, after He created man, paraded all the animals in front of Adam to name. In the process, Adam must have seen that every animal kind was male and female. Each kind had its male and female counterparts, but Adam did not have his. In fact, before this parade of animals occurred, God declared, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a help meet for him." God knew this, but Adam had to learn this. God wanted to teach Adam, that being a loner, even with a tight relationship with God, is still not "good" in God's eyes. Living in some monastery, seeking God in a closet for half a century is not part of God's plan. He created and designed man for community. We are to have communion-fellowship with our Creator and we are to have godly community with other followers of God.

When God created Eve out of Adam, He did not take part of the bone from the foot and form her. If He did, it might signify that Adam could keep her under his foot in slavish submission. God did not take a bone chip out of Adam's skull and form Eve from that, either. If He did, Adam might have been under the subjection of Eve's superior *headship* and *wisdom*. Instead, God took a bone fragment out of the side of Adam and formed Eve. Why? So that they could walk together. We find this concept in Ecclesiastes 4:12, where it says, "And if

one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken.” This concept is founded in the fact that when the husband and wife consummate their marriage they are *one flesh*.² This is also seen in Amos 3:3 where God asks, “Can two walk together, except they be agreed?” The unity in marriage is, in essence, a form of the reflection of the image of God in mankind. But where does the “three” come into play, as in the concept of a “threefold cord,” since there is just a husband and wife becoming one? It comes “into play” in the fact that God told Adam and Eve to be fruitful and to multiply. They were to have children. That is where the “three” (i.e.: implied: “or more”) comes in. God created the “family” of mankind, not just a “couple’s” retreat. “Family” is the basis of all society, and it is the smallest form of human community found on the face of the earth. Thus God did create *community* as a reflection of the *community* that He is, as the Triune God.

The Foundations

What has been discussed thus far is just part of the biblical and theological foundation that can be used in defining the concept of small groups in the local church. It is the foundation of the foundation, since God is the foundation of the church and of creation. Jesus Christ, Himself, is the foundation and the chief cornerstone of the church.³ As the church, we must have this kind of foundation for all that we are and all that we do as the Body of Christ. How we, as Christians, “do” church ministry should be patterned after what is seen and taught in the Holy Bible.

As I started to observe and analyze what I was involved in, in the local church context, I realized that something was missing. That missing part was *community*, as seen in the Old and New Testaments. As that little group that I was a part of started, we did not know what modern-day “model” we should follow. We did not know what to “call” it. We just knew that in the New Testament we saw what the infant/early church was being and was doing. We saw that the infant church, as seen in the book of Acts, was doing things that most churches are not doing today. We sought to emulate what the early church was BEING and was DOING. As we studied the Gospels and the book of Acts, we saw that we needed to love one another, pray for one another, confess our sins to one another, forgive one another, encourage one another, exhort one another, admonish one another, forbear with one another, and so on. We called these biblical mandates of Christ, the *One Anothers*. It was not a real fancy term, but we started to study the New Testament and saw that these mandates were quite numerous.

We Sensed the Hand of God

We thought, that if we started being obedient doing these mandates, God could use us to reach other people for Christ, since we were loving one another as Christ commanded us ⁴. He said that if we had unity and love for one another as He had for us, all the world would know we were His disciples. And in His High Priestly prayer in John chapter 17, He expected and knew that other people would become His followers through our word (i.e.: spreading the gospel) while

we were experiencing unity and community with God and with our fellow believers. People are looking for authentic and genuine Christianity that is full of love and truth. We, in essence, were seeking to allow Jesus to flow through us to the world around us. But we knew that we were not perfect and that we needed each other in this process to become more effective and fruitful in our effort to make, grow and multiply disciples for Jesus Christ.

The concept of *community*, from a biblical standpoint, was something I did not fully understand, back then. I was experiencing some of it, but it would have been nice to have some pastoral oversight and help back then. Now, years later, I have a clearer understanding of these concepts. Sometimes it is a good thing to have someone who has more experience in a subject explain concepts in a more concise and clear fashion. The following person does this quite well:

Ralph Neighbour, Jr. in his classic work on the concept of the Cell Group Church, *Where Do We Go From Here?* quotes M. Scott Peck from his book, *The Different Drum*:

If we are to use the word [community] meaningfully, we must restrict it to a group of individuals who have learned how to communicate honestly with each other, whose relationships go deeper than their masks of composure, and who have developed some significant commitment to “rejoice together, mourn together,” and to “delight in each other, make others’ conditions our own.”⁵

These are mind blowing ideas and concepts, but they are really found right in the text of the Holy Bible. During those early years that I was discovering these concepts, they were not very popular. It was like pouring “new wine” into “old wineskins.” Jesus warned His followers that most people liked the “old wine”

in the “old wineskins”⁶, and I found His teaching to be very true. I had other “church goers” think we wanted to form a commune. Others thought that what we were doing was cultish and it would cause people to not want to “go to church on Sundays.” Both of these accusations were far from the truth. As this study will show, the early church met “publicly” and from “house to house.” So nothing could have been farther from the truth. In the next few chapters this study will explore some of the challenges the church has faced by avoiding God’s plan for the Body of Christ to experience community, His way. There are many today that are still very skeptical regarding this way of doing church. But this seems to be the way God is leading His church, in these last days, back into His arms and into His Harvest as a force of effective and fruitful evangelism.

Chapter 2

Got *Small Groups*?

During the last 5 or so years, there was a popular series of commercials on television that used the phrase “Got Milk?.” In one of the scenes, the Pillsbury Doughboy[®] is dancing around on a table and a small Russian family is celebrating the great pastries that they have just baked and are eating. Then, the wife comes into the scene of dancing celebration and breaks the bad news, “The milk has run out; we are out of milk.” The exuberance and celebration dies immediately. As everyone looks at each other with sad, pastry filled faces, with flour powder all over the outside of their mouths and on their hands, the screen goes black and says “Got Milk?” - first in Russian, then in English. In the same way, this might be the scene when God comes to town to visit a church in some town nearby. We may think everything is running just fine, but He may exclaim, “Got *small groups*?”

Jesus Got Group!

As we, the reader and I, continue to explore these concepts, it is important to define what a *small group* is. Obviously, it is not a *large group*. But how can one find out what the difference is? All we need to do is explore our Lord and Savior’s earthly ministry. We can see from the Gospels that He spent time with His small group of 12 and 3. He had the 12 disciples, whom He called Apostles¹. In Mark 3:14, the phrase “that they should be with Him” is before the next phrase

“that He might send them forth to preach.” The small group context Jesus worked with was at the most 12 persons. So we shall look at this as a benchmark number, since Jesus Christ is our Master, and thus the master of relational issues. If our Master, Teacher, and Lord was involved in a small group, why would we choose anything less? Jesus could say “I Got Small Group!” And He even went further, and had a small group of 3 men, whom He spent much time with. This smaller, inner circle was composed of Peter, James and John ². Jesus shared His life with these groups of 12 and 3 persons. And when the time came for Jesus to be betrayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, He looked to those of His small group for some encouragement and prayer ³. When they did not stay awake, Jesus was a little angered with them, which implies relational expectations from deep friendships that developed. Jesus developed a small group that was supposed to supply mutual support, encouragement and fellowship. And it had to be small enough to allow community to exist and to flow in relational ways.

Size Does Matter

As to this concept of small group, relational flow of encouragement, support and fellowship, and depth of relationship can occur based on many factors. For example, you can be in a group of thousands and relate to God intimately, because God is omnipresent. But you are bound by time and space, regarding relating to others deeply. As the concept of biblical community demands, you must have some relationships that are in the context of small

groups. This concept has been explained well by Bill Beckham in his highly technical, but valuable book *The Second Reformation: Reshaping the Church for the 21st Century*:

The formula for group communication lines is $N \times N - (N) = CL$. “N” stands for the number of persons and “CL” represents communication lines. The number of persons present, multiplied by the number of persons present, minus the number of persons present, equals the number of communication lines in the group. For example, suppose four persons get together for a meeting. How many lines of communication will be present? Using the formula, we have this: $4 \times 4 - (4) = CL$. 4 times 4 equal 16. 16 minus 4 equals 12. In a group of four there are 12 lines of communication.

Now what about a group of twelve? $12 \times 12 - (12) = 132$. In a group of twelve, for everyone to relate to the other members in some kind of personal way, there must be 132 separate incidents of relationship. Do you see why Jesus only had twelve disciples. Size of the group does make a difference in relationship and community.⁴

In the discussion of the concept of small group, size does matter. In many small group models, the normal range of size is anywhere from 4 to 15. Anything larger than 15, these experts claim, would be a large group. At that size, it becomes a “mid-sized group” or a “large group” and those relational and community dynamics native to a small group fade away. Joel Comiskey tends to define a biblical small group in the following way:

“A group of people (five to 15) who meet regularly for the purpose of spiritual edification and evangelistic outreach (with the goal of multiplication [of the group and the disciples]) and who are committed to participate in the functions of the local church.”⁵

The varying definitions seems to line up within the range of expected *lines of communication*, as discussed above. Also, the group is not just a “group of men

going fishing” (John 21:1-3). It is clear that if we are going to discuss biblically-based small groups, it must be that Jesus Christ is at the center of them.

I Have a Dream...

The definition and practice of small group community, as seen in the New Testament documents, demands that we make sure that we are not talking about “a woman’s sewing group” that is sponsored by the local park system. We must make sure that we are discussing some kind of small group that fosters the type of community that is seen so significant in the “infant” and “early” church. The book of Acts, from start to finish, is filled with illustrations of this type of community. But is the church of Jesus Christ, the Body of Christ, today, experiencing this, or is it just the status quo - *the same old, same old?*

Experiencing community is not some new passing fad. It is well founded in Scripture. From the very Triune nature of God and the unique way He designed us, the concept of community has been clearly seen. The famous Upper Room Discourse, which includes our Lord’s *High Priestly Prayer*, is found in the Gospel of John, chapters 13 through 17. This discourse adds to the foundation of the concept of *community*. In these chapters, Jesus explains how He desires a deep relationship with His disciples, how He was going away and would not abandon them, and how He would send to them the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. In the very first few verses of Chapter 13, Jesus displayed His humility of servant-hood by washing their feet and explaining that they needed to love one another in the same way that He loved them. Jesus

was laying a foundation of relational community, based on Jesus being the center of it all. Jesus taught them that they needed to treat each other with His love. He showed them that this type of love would be supernatural. The disciples would have to be close to each other enough to love one another. And, these disciples would need God's Holy Spirit in them to enable them to love one another, the way He wanted them to.

The culmination of this Upper Room passage finds itself in chapter 17. This prayer is adequately named Christ's *High Priestly Prayer*. In this prayer Jesus Christ prayed for His current disciples that were present with Him. He, also, prayed for those who would become His disciples in the future. He prayed for all of them to be in unity and community with God the Father and Jesus Christ and with one another. The reason for this was for further evangelism. We see this in John 17:13-23:

“And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have **My joy** fulfilled in themselves. ^[14] I have given them Thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. ^[15] I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil [one]. ^[16] They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. ^[17] Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth. ^[18] **As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.** ^[19] And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. ^[20] **Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word;** ^[21] That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us: **that the world may believe that thou hast sent Me.** ^[22] And the glory which Thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as We are one: ^[23] I in them, and Thou in me, that they may be made

perfect in one; **and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me**, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me.” (emphasis mine)

Christ’s prayer for His church is that we are to be in complete unity with Him and with His Father, and with each other. He says that we need that kind of community in our lives in order to be effective in carrying out the Great Commission as described in Matthew 28:18-20. Christ wants us to experience the kind of community that is filled with His joy. He wants us to experience the community like He experiences within the Triune Godhead. That joy flows from His heart into our hearts and lives. He wants that joy to flow through our hearts and lives into others so that we can experience that same kind of community. This is Christ’s “Dream” for His church. It would be wrong for His church to seek to avoid fulfilling His Dream. He wants His Dream to be a reality and for it to be the normal operating procedures in His Bride.

Span of Care

When a person is sitting in a crowd of 120 people, no matter how relational he is, he cannot experience community with all 120 people. He can, however, experience community with 10. This is where the concept of “span of care” comes into the discussion. Seeing that Jesus Christ wants us to experience His kind of community, that is centered on Him and expressed in love by doing the *One Anothers*, Jesus wants us to care for one another and to receive care from one another. This can be summed up with the concept of the ***span of care***.⁶ By putting this concept into practice in the local church

fellowship, it will ensure “that everybody is cared for, but no one cares for too many people.”⁷ And as it has been seen with the concept of the “communication lines [CL]” earlier in this study, having more than 12 people in one’s span of care, can create some relational difficulties, almost exponentially. If each believer should be cared for and each should care for others, but not too many, how many is *too many*? As the number of CLs (communication lines) increase past 12, they can become “too many” for most people. Case in point, Jesus Christ only had 12 disciples, and He was fully God and fully man. So, it would be almost superhuman to have more than 12 people in one’s *span of care*.

In the Body of Christ, Jesus dreamed of His church as being in community, in the same sense of unity and community that He experiences within the Triune Godhead. This may seem far-fetched, but it is exactly what He prayed for in chapter 17 of the Gospel of John. In addition to this, He wanted us to love one another in the same way the He loved us, because it would show the world that God is real, genuine, authentic, and full of love.⁸ It seems that Jesus Christ knows what lost man is really seeking. There are lost people, who are genuinely seeking reality. They might not know what it is, but God has allowed sinful man to have this “God-shaped void” in his life, so that when he recognizes God’s genuine love, the “void” can act like a “homing device” that can draw him to that love. We are called by God to love each other this way so that lost mankind will find God’s salvation in Christ Jesus. This kind of community that God wants us to have is best expressed in small groups of Christians that care for one another utilizing the *One Anothers*. In the next few chapters we will

explore more of this great adventure of the Body of Christ in becoming a Bride that is close to her Betrothed and is effective in growing and multiplying more disciples to be a part of this self-same Bride.

Chapter 3

*“What happened to my other wing?
I can barely fly in a circle...”*

A bird that has its wing clipped can fly a little, but not too far and mostly very erratic. I know this from experience. We, my family and I, used to raise chickens and those chickens were my favorite animals (as farm animals go). We really didn't have a farm, it was more like a small ranch. We had two sheep, two horses, a donkey, and around 12 (or more) chickens. There were at least 10 hens and 3 roosters. There were 3 roosters, but the most beautiful rooster we had, a “Plymouth Rock” (we called him Pilgrim), did not know what he could do with the hens. He liked to strut around as if he was the big boy in town, while the other two roosters had their way with the ladies. I liked all of our chickens because I received much enjoyment watching them interact, eat, and hunt for food. They loved to hunt for food when I let them out of their big *chicken mansion*. They loved to roam around all over our acreage. And they were my favorite, because they laid the most delicious eggs. Now this little chicken story is not the really the whole point (their eggs, though, were the best on the planet). The point is, for each chicken, we had to clip one of their wings. Why? “So that the big bad wolf wouldn't get them?” Well, it was kind of something like that.

When raising chickens, or any domesticated fowl, one must clip one of their wings. It was the same when we were raising turkeys. This action would limit their flight capabilities. They can fly, but only a few feet vertically and horizontally. This limitation, usually allowed them to have the dignity of being a

“bird” and still be able fly a little, but not very effectively. Since we had a high fence all around our property, rarely would our chickens attempt to fly up and over them. Since their flying capabilities were limited and not very accurate, most would not want to risk it. Yes, I know you are saying in your head, “chickens are pretty dumb creatures.” Yes, this is true, but the ones that are not so dumb stay alive. You see, on the other side of that fence, every night there was a regular patrol of wild coyotes that loved to eat the really dumb chickens that somehow made it over the fence. These “special” chickens probably thought that they really “did the ‘chicken run’” and escaped into “freedom.” Really, what they did was escape right onto the dinner plate of *Wyle E. Coyote*, who would forgo the lovely *Road Runner*, for the much slower and “dumber” chicken. Needless to say, in our case, we liked to keep our chickens alive, because we loved the eggs they freely (or almost freely) laid for us each day, so we clipped one of their wings. This was a “loving” thing we did to them, although they may have disagreed with us on this point.

Fly Like an Eagle - with Both Wings...

If this scenario was applied to the glorious Bald Eagle, our national bird, it would be a travesty. Most people would never think of clipping one of the wings of the wild and majestic Bald Eagle. The FBI would put that person promptly in jail. But this is precisely what has happened to the church, the Body of Christ. You might ask why I would state this. It is because, just as there are two wings that a bird needs to fly effectively, so the church, the Body of Christ needs the

two wings of *the large (public) group* and *the small group* to be effective in being the church as Christ wants her to be.

As we have seen, that “In the Beginning God Created...” community, flowing out of the *community* that He *IS*, within His very *Being*: the Triune Godhead. In the same way, He created the church to be like that with Him and with the members of the Body, internally. As we have seen, this is best expressed in the small group context. But this is not the only way the Body of Christ was to express herself. In the book of Acts, there are some passages that help us see this new life in Christ and the church’s expression of it. Acts 2:42-47 states it this way:

“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. ^[43] And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. ^[44] And all that believed were together, and had all things common; ^[45] And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. ^[46] And they, continuing daily with one accord in **the temple**, and breaking bread **from house to house**, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, ^[47] Praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord **added** to the church daily such as should be saved.”

This passage gives us an overview of how the new, infant church lived and loved. It does not show that this new group of over 3000 believers was highly structured, as many churches are today, with every kind of program and service. It was a simple relational structure of a living organism, the Body of Christ. There were no other believers in Jesus Christ existing at that time. Pretty quickly, many of the items of what Jesus Christ “Dreamed” about were actually coming true, in a matter of days. In verse 46, we see that they met in large group, public,

meetings in the temple and in small group meetings from house to house. It is, also, seen that these new believers were fully devoted to God's Word, as it was being taught by the apostles, and they were fully devoted to fellowship (i.e. "community"). These were foundational to the rest of what they were and what they did. As time goes on, through the book of Acts, this simple structure is only modified by the Eldership and Deacon-ship leadership function levels from Acts 6 and onward. There is really not much more "structure" added. The pattern of meeting in the larger groups that were public and in smaller home-based groups is also seen in Acts 5:42 and Acts 20:20, 28. This pattern seems to not diminish throughout the book of Acts, nor throughout the early two centuries of Christianity.

O.K., Who Started It?

Jesus was the one who actually started this pattern. As we remember, in the Gospels, Jesus taught the larger crowds, and then He would get together with His small group, His disciples, the groups of 3, 12, and 70. In these smaller, more intimate settings, He discussed many more detailed and intimate things with them. There is a great example of this in Matthew chapter 13. Jesus discussed the parables to the large gathered crowds, and then He got into a smaller setting with His disciples and told them that He would explain the meanings of these parables, because the parables were for crowds of people out there, but the "mysteries of the Kingdom" was for them. Also, when Jesus sent

out the 70, as recorded in Luke chapter 10, He paired them up (hey that is a small group, isn't it?), and then told them some instructions:

Luke 10:5-9 “And into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace be to this house. ^[6] And if the son [*man*] of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it: if not, it shall turn to you again. ^[7] And in the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give: for the laborer is worthy of his hire. Go not from house to house. ^[8] And into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you: ^[9] And heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.”
(emphasis mine)

In this passage, the disciples were to find a “man of peace” and a “house of peace” and then use that “home” as their base of operations to reach the rest of that town for Christ. It seems, that after Pentecost came and the church was born of the Spirit, that the early church continued using this pattern of ministering through the homes. Although, the Luke passage, above, does say, “Go not from house to house,” in that context, it meant that the disciples, in their “trial” missionary trip, were not to go from house to house to find the best lodging. Once they found a willing person who really liked their message (i.e.: “a man of peace”), then the disciples were to stay and lodge there and eat whatever their hosts would provide. The mention of the new believers going from “house to house” in Acts 2:46, is explaining that there were so many disciples, that they had to meet in many homes, not that they were jumping from “house to house,” but that they were meeting in small groups throughout the city and region.

This is the beginning pattern of the new, infant church as seen in the book of Acts. In Acts 2:42, we can see that they were fully and radically devoting

themselves consistently to “the apostles’ teaching, to fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to the prayers.” This was the normal and standard operating procedures in the early church. They would meet publicly in a place that was called *Solomon’s Porch*, a certain section in the Temple in Jerusalem, in the same place that Jesus once taught. ¹ They would, also, meet from house to house, sharing their meals together, loving one another, and experiencing that *community* Christ dreamed about for His Church. And, as a result of this, many were added daily to the church as seen in Acts 2:46-47. They were full of the Joy of Jesus Christ and experiencing all that Christ had prayed for in John chapters 13-17.

They Met Publicly and from House to House

These “two wings” of the expression of the Body of Christ, were active throughout the whole of the book of Acts, in all contexts. When Paul met with the elders of Ephesus as seen in Acts chapter 20, we read the following:

And when they were come to him, he said unto them, “Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, ^[19] Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews: ^[20] And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you, and have taught you **publicly**, and **from house to house**, ^[21] Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.” ²

Paul explained to these elders that he served them diligently publicly and from house to house. Acts 19:19 explains that Paul met with the believers, renting the school of Tyrannus, for a public teaching setting. But Paul and the church in

Ephesus also met from house to house. And that meant that Paul could not be in every home group each time they met together. And it did not mean the Paul went to each members home. But it did mean, that overall, with the help of the elders and other leadership, everyone was cared for, and no one cared for too many. This was similar to the concept of the “span of care” that was discussed in the last chapter. The concept of the “span of care” permeates the Bible, from cover to cover, if one is looking for it.

Jethro To The Rescue!

In the book of the Law of Moses, in Exodus chapter 18, there is a great illustration of the concept of the *span of care*. Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law, came into the camp of Israel and greeted his son-in-law and brought with him Moses’ wife and sons. It was a family reunion of sorts. As Jethro observed how Moses was performing his duties of judging the people, he mentioned to Moses, “The thing that thou doest is not good. Thou wilt surely wear away, both thou, and this people that is with thee: for this thing is too heavy for thee; thou art not able to perform it thyself alone.” To translate from the King James 1611 English, to something we can understand today... Jethro was saying to Moses : “what you are doing is not good. You will wear yourself out and you will wear out these people, as well. What you are doing is too much for any one person to do, you need some help.” In this illustration Moses was violating the concept of the *span of care*, to *the max*, as some would say. Jethro, under God’s inspiration, gave Moses a great plan. Moses should get some leadership, train them, and release

them into ministry, to help Moses out. There should be various levels of leadership, and it was to be divided into levels based on the factor of 5: leaders of thousands, leaders of hundreds, leaders of fifties, and leaders of tens. And only the really, really hard cases should come to Moses, and he could oversee the other leaders.³ So, in essence, the leaders who were overseeing the other levels of leaders would only need to have a span of care of 5, or 10 at the most, based on these levels. And the lowest echelon, i.e.: the “judge on the street,” would deal with only 10 people. Exodus 18 does not say that this relates to 10 cases a day, per month, or just make sure that they were to work with 10 people they knew. But in this scenario, it would be something that would not overwhelm and “burn-out” this person or the people he would be working with.

Moses would then be freed up to be the leader over the whole congregation, the head overseer, as it were, and be effective in leadership because of a great system of leadership. We will call this principle “the Jethro Principle” of leadership. Since Jethro was the one who mentioned it, honor should go where honor belongs. Although, really, this is a principle that is found in the heart of God Himself.

This *Jethro Principle* must have been on the mind of Paul as he set up elders and deacons in the various churches that he planted. We see that he sent out young Timothy and Titus to do the same in Ephesus and in Crete: leadership development. As we have seen in Acts 20:17-38, this “Leadership Conference” was not just some “pep talk” or some *denominational* event, it was the passing of

the baton of leadership, and in the context of community, these were the leaders over the *span of care*. The church in Ephesus met publicly and from house to house. Both “wings” were used in the church and the leadership was to make sure that both “wings” continued to be effective and fruitful. That, in essence, sums up the leadership of the church in a very simplistic way.

Married and can barely Fly anymore

As we see, those two “wings” of large group (public) meetings, and small group (house to house) meetings were very functional and the very pattern of how the early church *did church*. But this pattern changed during the time of Constantine and immediately after. Historically, small groups of Christians that met in the homes, were *done away with* around this time, by the law of the Empire. Christianity became the State Religion, but with that *marriage* of the State and the “Church”, certain parts of the church were “clipped,” as it were. There was a cost to this marriage. Yes, it is true, that Christians could meet openly without fear of persecution. But, it was also true, that Christians could not meet in their homes, led by a non-ordained, Christ-loving facilitator, anymore.

Bill Beckham explains:

Using a combination of Roman governmental and feudal systems, Emperor Constantine developed a church structure that has lasted for seventeen centuries. What are the characteristics of Constantine’s cathedral paradigm?

- People go to a building (cathedral)
- on a special day of the week (Sunday)
- and someone (a priest, or today, a pastor)
- does something to them (teaching, preaching, absolution or healing)

- or for them (a ritual or entertainment)
- for a price (offerings)

By building cathedrals and placing rituals and leadership within those buildings, Constantine changed the very nature and life of the church as originally designed by Christ. These changes grew out of new ways of thinking about God's church as an *organization* rather than as an *organism*... It was not the *cathedral* that affected the church; it was what the *cathedral approach* did to the *small group context* of the church.⁴

The "cathedral approach" undermined the "small group context" of the church, and in effect, clipped one of her wings, and the "two winged church" could not fly like she used to. She was tied down, clipped, and married to the state. She was restricted in her flight capabilities, and has never been the same since. Instead of the church, the Body of Christ, meeting publicly in large groups and from house to house in small groups, Constantine and later Emperors forced a change upon the church to minimize and to marginalize the small group "wing" of the church. This was not Christ's Dream for His church in any way. She was suppose to soar up into the heights of heaven and swiftly and effectively spread the gospel all over the world, "on the wings of an eagle." The "cathedral approach," as Bill Beckham has shown, was something that should not have happened to the church as we know it. This is the structure of the church that has been inherited throughout the ages until just recently.

Light, a little light at the end of the tunnel

Toward the end of the Middle Ages (or *Dark Ages*) there were a few "reformer" groups that were meeting from "house to house" in secret small

groups, for the sake of security. Some of these groups were doctrinally sound, while others were not. But the point is, that many of these groups, were meeting as the early church was. The Cathars, Bogomils, Waldensians, Lollards, and Hussites were some of these groups. There were others. The Waldensians, who were founded by Peter Waldo in 1176 AD, continued to preach the gospel even after being excommunicated by the Roman Catholic Church. Driven by the New Testament ideal, they began to preach against the abuses and non-Scriptural practices in the Roman Catholic Church. This group met for informal meetings in the homes for worship, Bible study and fellowship. During this time, also, there were many other groups, even within the Roman Catholic Church and various monastic movements, which seem to suggest the trend toward small group involvement.⁵ It can be noted that this pattern of small group community seems to spring up many times in history when there is some sort of reformation in the Body of Christ.

The best known case of a church “with” or “of” small groups, that was considered a movement, were the *Methodists*, which followed on the heels of the Reformation. This movement is well documented in many Christian and secular historical books. In this movement, Samuel Wesley, an Anglican preacher, using Christ’s own words that are found in Matthew 18:20, “For where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them...”, developed what he called *religious societies*. This movement began in Epworth, on the Isle of Axholm, Lincolnshire, England, February 1, 1701. These “societies” were his version of the small group communities Jesus Christ envisioned and dreamed

about in the Gospel of John, chapters 13-17. The members of these groups were to get together to pray, read the Holy Scriptures, discuss “Religious” subjects that would lead to mutual edification, and to seek to bring their neighbors to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ in a humble and meek way. They also met to confess their sins one to another and to help one another to become more holy and doctrinally sound. Wesley wanted to maintain the smallness of these groups so as to not lose their community. He wanted to keep their number to around 12, maximum. He wanted to keep the focus on becoming responsible to and accountable for and with one another in their group. He wanted the members of these little groups to develop Christ-like care and concern for one another and evangelistic concern for the lost. These groups were gender based groups, men with men, and women with women. Wesley took all of the “One Anothers” seriously, including the passage found in James 5:13-16, which says that we are to “confess our sins one to another, and pray for one another, that ye may be healed.”⁷ Thus Wesley saw, that in order to really pursue Christianity, biblically, it would involve small groups of some fashion. It might be, also, noted that these “societies” met mostly in homes. The participants of these small groups also continued the practice of gathering in their large group meetings at the parish church led by Wesley. The participants of this movement continued to meet in large groups and in small groups, utilizing both “wings” of the church. They did things with a method. That was the reason they were called “Methodists”.

There was a light at the end of the tunnel of the “Dark Ages” as some people were seeking the true and living God, the God of the Bible; He was leading them to do the same things that the early infant church did as seen in the book of Acts. In the next chapter we will discuss some of the ways in which churches since the reformation have sought to capture biblical community and express that in some form or fashion.

Chapter 4

“What shape is your small group?”

Our Inheritance: The PBD Church Model

The cathedral approach and design of the church from the *Middle Ages* or rather, the *Dark Ages*, has left its imprint on many churches today. A person can hear it echo in history when someone says, “I am going to church, would you like to come along.” From the time that Constantine married the “*Church*” to the State, this terrible legacy has been ours ever since. The ugly stepchild of that dark time is what is called by many, the *Program-Based Design* church model, or *PBD*. This cathedral model is still alive today.

The PBD modeled church has been adapted from the “cathedral” model of the *Dark Ages* into something that has come out of the *Industrial Age*. In the middle to late 1800s, this model started to form out of a simple model that was inherited. That simple model was the “pure cathedral” model. That pure model was church being held in a building. It was the cathedral, where a church service was held, and that was it. Since most people in the United States, from its inception, were living in rural areas, the rural, one room church was the typical model. It is true that there were some very large churches in some of the cities in the northeast coastal areas of the United States, but for the most part it was the simple cathedral model that was the norm. There were not many churches that would venture into having home-based Bible studies. If that did take place, it was a rarity, indeed.

As the Industrial Revolution exploded on the scene, people started to flock to the *big city*. Family units were broken up in the process and many disassociated families were being amassed into large blocks of apartments and other types of housing neighborhoods. The church in those areas had to adapt to survive. In fact, unless a church changed and adapted, they were left out of the large amount of people starting to go to church toward the end of the 1800s. During this time period, there were many revivals and great throngs of people were going to church. The local churches had to adapt or lose in this “competitive” environment.

Maybe This Will Work?

About this time, the “Sunday School” movement started to take place. This was “kind of” a small group. But it was much more than just a small group of people. It was a didactic (teaching oriented) discipleship class system. Many classes were formed and held in homes and in church buildings. Many of these meetings were held after the normal morning church service, in the afternoon. And during this time, building upon the great success of the Sunday School system, many churches started Sunday evening and Wednesday night services, as well. Many of these “new” or “alternative” meetings were mixtures of prayer and Bible teaching and tended to be smaller in size than the normal *Sunday Morning Worship* service¹. The Industrial Revolution left its mark on all of this. Local churches, at that time, were becoming more organized after the pattern of a business. The church was becoming more organized and fashioned similar to

the pattern of a machine. Churches developed “departments,” and had “directors” running various “departments” and/or “programs.” They developed budgets that would make a modern-day CEO very glad. These churches were like well-oiled machines that “churned” out “converts” and turned them into “members”.

Now, I am not saying that being organized and seeking to save the lost and helping them become consistent and fruitful members of the local church is bad. What I am seeking in this *“look back in history”* is to find out what model and pattern these “Industrial Age”-PBD churches were using. In essence, I am seeking to answer the question “what were they looking at to model their local church ministries after, and why?” By the way, the PBD model was working quite well, for a number of years. In fact, my parents grew up in that type of church model. I grew up in a church like that, as well. But being born in the early 1960s, if the reader knows his or her history, this was a time of radical and drastic changes. People no longer wanted the status quo, they wanted reality. And they wanted more than just working, paying the mortgage, going to church, being a nice taxpayer, raising a family, and then dying. That “new generation” was starting to feel that there had to be more to life than this “mechanized” society that was running like a machine, which they also saw reflected in how the church was doing its “business.” The PBD church was going to face its greatest challenge: “REALITY”.

During the late 1960s and early 1970s there were a few “daring” churches that

began seeking to reach a new emerging culture that was not used to “church,” going to church, or the “churchy” ways of doing things. Many of these “unchurched” non-Christians did not know what a church hymnal was, or that an organ can be played outside of a funeral home. Thus, a new generation of churches were being started or transitioned to become “contemporary” churches. A typical newer “contemporary” church did not use a pipe organ, hymnals, or any of the older traditional ways of doing church. A typical newer “contemporary” church would have something almost like a “rock and roll” concert for a worship service with a “rock” band composed of guitars, bass guitars, drums, and front singers that made up their worship team. The worship service would open with a modern worship band leading the “praise and worship time” and then after that was done, the pastor would come up on the stage and preach a sermon. The “order of service” was still similar to the “traditional hymnal and organ-based worship service.” In the more modern contemporary church, the sermon was geared toward the language of the newer generation. These messages were geared toward helping these “unchurched” people understand God’s Word. These kind of churches might even use more modern and more understandable translations of the Bible, as well. A very famous church that attempted to do this and has been extremely successful is Calvary Chapel of Costa Mesa, California, pastored by Chuck Smith.² Yet, Calvary Chapel, for the most part, is still patterned after the *PBD* paradigm. Therefore, becoming a contemporary church does not automatically translate that it is a *church “of” small groups*. It may be

more contemporary in its public worship service, but it still may continue to be a *PBD* structured church.

The PBD church with its ministry departments, directors, and other “mechanized” regional autonomous modalities, each department can become something like a “parachurch” organization all unto itself. Each department must seek to recruit “bodies” to fill various positions so that each “ministry” can “function” properly. There may be training and equipping involved in this process, as well. For each “department” to be successful, each director must show proof of success, with numbers and some sort of results. Here is where the “Catch 22” comes into play. Notice I did not use the “chicken or the egg - which came first” scenario. I raised chickens before, I know the answer to that one. Back to the “Catch 22” situation regarding PBD “ministry” departments. In this scenario, the reality is, that if all of the positions were filled, even with many assistant helpers, not all of the people in the congregation would be involved in some sort of Body Life Ministry. In a typical 150 member church, if all of the positions for leading and helping out with Sunday School, children’s church, youth group, and ushering were all filled, it would still leave over 90 people with nothing to do except to *spectate*. In fact, the PBD system has developed a whole new type of church member, the “drive-in” consumer. The church member is cultivated to begin to ask “what can I get out of this church, what does it have to offer me and my family?” Instead of forming servant-hearted disciples who want to make, grow, and multiply reproducing disciples, the PBD model has developed many generations of “church-going’ consumers.” Is there a remedy for this?

Back to the book of Acts: The Cell-Group Church Model

In the 1960s and 1970s, there were some great pioneers of the small group paradigm that helped to form what this movement is today. These early groups of pioneers were **sickened** in their hearts regarding this **consumeristic** mentality that they saw in the church at large. They saw the contrast of that *consumerism* with what they saw in the early church's model, as seen in Acts 2:42-47 and in other New Testament passages. They felt the call of God to "get back to the basics" and to "get back to the simplicity of the early church." They **strove** to develop churches that would have "basic Christian community" as the core of all that they were and all that they would do. These small groups that they sought to develop, these basic Christian communities, were home-based small groups.

Why home-based small groups? When in a home, the atmosphere is more personable, casual, and relaxed. One can let one's "hair down," so to speak. The proverbial "masks" can be taken off, and people can become more genuine toward each other. It also provides the sense of a "family" atmosphere, since families tend to live in homes. Another reason, is the fact that if a church was to "house" all of the small groups on the church property, there would always be a constant building program. If a church understands the principles of "span of care" and "Christ's Dream for Community," and yet does not want to have their small groups in homes, the alternative would be to have them on the campus of the church property. I think the reader can figure out, as these early pioneers of

small groups did, that this would necessitate there being a constant “building program” to create more and more small group “rooms” on the church campus. The type of biblical small group community that has been seen in this study so far, seems to require some privacy and space for about 12 people (15 maximum). This means that a typical 250 member church would need something like 25 private rooms, just for their small group ministry. And as the church grows in numbers, so will those small groups and the need for more “small group” rooms. To these early pioneers of the *small groups* movement, following the early church pattern of home-based small groups, as seen in the book of Acts, made more sense than expensive and continuous “building projects” on a church campus.

The term for these home-based small groups was coined: “cell groups.” Paul Cho, of Yoido Full Gospel Church, South Korea, made this term famous. While many churches at that time resisted change, the *cell group* form of small group was being utilized on the mission field with great success, especially in Asia. In Seoul, South Korea, Yoido Full Gospel Church has over 800,000 people that call that church their home. It is structured in such a way, that every believer can be within a “span of care,” in a “cell group.” These groups started in 1964 and have continued since then. Over a period of 25 years, there was an average of 140 new converts added to the church every day. Dr. Cho, the pastor of this church, utilized the “cell group” system to help fold in these new believers into caring small group-based communities. This is not just an isolated phenomenon, it was a normal pattern. Yoido Full Gospel Church is not the only church doing

this model. There are many others, including two of the largest Presbyterian churches in the world, which are also located in South Korea. This same kind of growth of “Cell Group Churches” is now seen throughout China, Thailand, Japan, Macau, Taiwan, and many other Asian Countries.³

This model is not just an “Asian” phenomenon,” though. It is also springing up in the continents of Africa and Eurasia. It has become a world-wide movement. And it should be noted, that it is not a denominational movement, either, as there are many churches around the world, from Southern Baptist to Pentecostal, that are utilizing this model of ministry.

Linus J. Morris, in his book *The High Impact Church*, tells how a church in Portland, Oregon, was able to approach biblical community using the cell group system:

Dale Galloway, pastor of New Hope Community Church in Portland, Oregon, disputes the contention that successful cell groups are restricted to certain cultures. Portland is called the “most unchurched city in America”.

Before launching New Hope, Galloway had a clear-cut vision that the new church could attract unchurched thousands in the city of Portland. Today, the church has grown to more than 6,000 members in “Tender Loving Care” groups adapted from Cho’s community home cell group strategy.⁴

The Cell Group system seems to be adaptable and used by people who are passionate about community as Christ described it. It is a really great system to allow the Christian to do the “One Anothers” and to allow participants to grow in Jesus Christ. This system also allows for a way to reach the “unchurched” in a “non-church” approach. Since the unchurched non-Christian is not stepping into

the sanctuary of the church building, he might be more apt to go to a home where a bunch of friends are “hanging out” discussing “religious” stuff, and eating food. The cell-group model is a great strategy to reach the lost, while at the same time, providing a safe relational setting where the person who is saved can experience community like Jesus wants.

The “cell group” system was really exposed to the North American church by Dr. Ralph W. Neighbour, Jr., in the late 1970s. Dr. Neighbour, after many years with the Southern Baptist publishing house of Broadman & Holman, went to Singapore to be on the staff of Faith Community Baptist Church. There, he was able to observe and be involved with the cell group system. He was able to work with their *cell group*-based ministry, from start to finish. His many years of developing discipleship materials with Broadman & Holman (now - “LifeWay”), enabled him to develop many materials to help with the cell group movement. Today, many look to Dr. Ralph Neighbour as the person who really made the “cell group” movement almost a “household” name.⁵

Within the cell group system, the cell group is the basic Christian community unit. Within this system of small groups, the participant of such a group finds his or her primary and basic Christian fellowship, relationships, accountability, and equipping. This does not mean that the local church, which is made up of this system of networks of cell groups, does not have other equipping structures such as special equipping classes or seminars, or that they do not attend the weekly public celebration service at the “church building.” It does, however, mean that the first, primary and basic biblically-based *community*,

happens within and through that *cell group* he or she is a member of. This group is that Christian's primary and basic accountability and support system within the Body of Christ. He or she looks to the group and the group leader for encouragement, love, care, support and fellowship. Also, within his group, the Christian is able to minister God's love and care to others, according to the giftedness as God by His Spirit has enabled him, for the common good.

Another interesting feature of the normal cell-group-based small group system church, is the ability of these groups to multiply. As these groups get to a certain number of participants, they tend to lose their "smallness" and become more of a "large" or "mid-sized" group. The essence of biblical community will become lost as this group grows in number. So, the group will multiply. It will go through "cell" multiplication. And this is part of the reason for the name of "cell group." Just like our human body is made up of billions of individual cells which grow and multiply, so these "cell groups" are within the local Body of Christ and they, too, go through growth and multiplication. It is a great analogy.

Each cell group is normally led by a facilitator. The group is not led by a teacher-type of leader, but a shepherd-facilitator. That kind of person is more of a loving shepherd, who facilitates the "cell-life" within the group, within the meeting and at other times outside of the meeting. This shepherd leader is more on the level of a deacon, according to 1 Timothy 3:8-13. He is under the spiritual shepherding care and accountability of a coach who makes sure that he is taken care of. The cell group leader helps to make sure that all of the participants

actually do participate in the Bible discussion, in the prayer time, in worship time, and in fellowship time. This is not a forced shepherding, but a loving shepherding. And the coach will help this cell group leader become the most effective shepherd he can be. Also, the coach will help the cell group leader develop an apprentice. This is so the group can multiply in the future. The group is prepared all along the way, so that it will grow and multiply if it is a healthy group. Multiplication of cell groups is not by accident, but it is intentional and well known to the cell members and its leadership.

There are typically levels of leadership to handle the “span of care” for each level, from the apprentice and cell group leader to the Division or Regional Pastor on staff. There are many models of cell group leadership, from the normal 5x5 model to the G-12 model and many variations in between. Each model seeks to use the *Jethro Principle* of Leadership, as seen in Exodus 18. Each model seeks to make sure that all of the various levels of leadership, coaches, and the pastors of the coaches are all taken care of and no one cares for too many. The old PBD church model tended to cause *burnout* with leaders and violated the *span of care* principle quite a bit. So, these cell group leadership models seek to avoid violation of the “span of care” principle, exemplified in the *Jethro Principle* of Leadership. For example: A 5x5 model of leadership might look like the following:

1. The cell group leader and his apprentice
The leader and apprentice care for 8 to 12 people in the group
2. The cell coach - he cares for 5 cell group leaders (oversees an average of 50 people)
3. The zone pastor - he cares for 5 cell coaches (oversees an average of 250 people)
4. The district pastor - he cares for 5 zone pastors (oversees an average of 1,250 people)
5. The senior pastoral team - oversees all the other district pastors.⁶

This is a typical scenario of the levels of leadership seeking to utilize the principle of the “span of care” based on the *Jethro Principle* of Leadership as seen in Exodus 18. There are other models that modify this way of doing leadership or use models that are completely different. But the goal is to seek to apply these biblical and proven principles of leadership.

Put It In a Blender, and you get: A Church OF Small Groups

As the cell group movement started to hit the shores of the United States, many took the same stand as Dr. Ralph Neighbour, but wanted to see how this model or paradigm might be adapted to their own situation, while seeking to fulfill the mandates of Christ of Worshiping and Serving God, doing the “One Another’s” and reaching the lost, while maintaining the biblical community and “span of care” as taught by Jesus Christ and the apostles. One of these early adapters and pioneers is Pastor Bill Hybels of Willow Creek Community Church in South Barrington, Illinois. This church, which started in 1975, wanted to be completely contemporary and seeker sensitive. In fact, when it comes to the phrases, *Seeker Targeted* and *Seeker Sensitive*, one can look to Bill Hybels. Willow Creek has been extremely innovative in its 30 years of existence, but they

have not always been a *Church OF Small Groups*, as they would like to call themselves today. Another church that uses a similar model, is very famous today: Saddleback Community Church in Southern California, pastored by Rick Warren. He was made famous by his two books *The Purpose-Driven Church* and *The Purpose-Driven Life*. Saddleback is one of the largest Southern Baptist Church in the United States. These two books by Rick Warren and the many books published by Willow Creek have fueled the fire of many churches seeking to implement the *Purpose-Driven* model, which is seeker sensitive, with the application of having a system of small groups. In fact, Willow Creek is the best promoter of the *Church OF Small Groups* in the USA right now. This model is called the “Meta-Church” model, championed by Carl George in his book *Prepare Your Church for the Future* (Grand Rapids: Baker 1991). With their Willow Creek Association of Churches, a very loose interdenominational association of “like-structured” churches, this paradigm of a *Church OF Small Groups* is taking off like wildfire.⁷

In the book *Building a Church OF Small Groups*, authors Bill Donahue and Russ Robinson provide a listing of qualities that are essential for their “Meta-Church” model of small groups:

What are the foundational or core components of small group community, and how do they contribute to church life? From studying the Acts 2 church and observing small groups at Willow Creek and other churches, we have identified four “non-negotiables” for achieving spiritual community within small groups. Omitting even one of these essential elements will severely reduce your church’s community quotient:

1. Small groups are built on authentic relationships.
2. Small groups are places where truth meets life.
3. Small groups experience healthy conflict.
4. Small groups provide well-balanced shepherding, so that people are both cared for and discipled.⁸

According to this paradigm, these “*non-negotiables*” are how Willow Creek, and others of “like-structured” churches, seek to make, grow, multiply healthy and biblical small groups and maintain and manage their small group system in a healthy way.

In their system of small groups, they want to have everyone who calls their church their “home church,” be a part of a small group. These groups come in all *shapes* and *colors*. They base their groups, not on the “one size fits all” model (i.e.: “cell groups”). Instead, they have all kinds of flavors of groups: affinity-based groups, age/stage in life-based groups, spiritual maturity-based groups, interest-based groups, tasks-based groups, care-based groups, and other types of groups.

The typical “Meta-Church” model of the leadership support system, is very similar to that of the “cell group” model. This model tends to follow the following structure of leadership support:

1. The small group leader and his apprentice
The leader and apprentice care for 4 to 10 people in the group
2. The lay “coach” - he cares for 5 small group leaders
(oversees an average of 20 to 50 people)
3. The “division leader” (can be lay or on staff (full or part-time) -
he cares for 10 cell coaches (oversees an average of 200 to 500 people)
4. The small group pastor - oversees all the other “division leaders” and ministry.

Riding This New Wave

In this study, I am not personally endorsing any of these churches, nor their individual doctrinal stances. I am, however, fascinated and amazed how many diverse churches of various doctrinal strains there are that have passionately pursued God, in their own ways, to find answers to find ways to provide biblical community as Christ wanted. In both of the major “small group” models that we have studied thus far (i.e.: “cell groups” and “Meta-Church” model small groups), seem to be pursuing genuine and authentic community as Jesus Christ dreamed about. I am very happy that there have been some bold believers that have stepped out of their respective comfort zones to explore new ways that might be relevant to people that they meet today. These models are actually producing real life change, where believers are growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ, experiencing mutual love, support, and encouragement. They are a part of the equipping process, that brings discipleship and allows every believer to participate as each “part” supplies (see Ephesians 4:11-16). Although, not every church that is pursuing one of these models or various blends of models, in my opinion, is doctrinally sound, many are. Today there are many doctrinally sound churches pursuing *biblical community* as Christ dreamed for His church to experience. This has resulted in more people coming to Christ and more of these churches retaining their members. It has also resulted in more of these members having “ownership” of their local church ministry. These members want to participate because they are experiencing exactly what Jesus described as community that is full of His joy.

Some may say that these churches have just developed a better mouse trap. Well, I say, “so be it.” If they have, and God is really blessing, why not use it. These models and structures are based on and motivated by scripture, not by the *Industrial Revolution* or by *Big Business*. These models do not find their pattern in politics either, since they are loving, caring, servant-hearted types of structures.

In this next and final chapter, this study will explore ways that these paradigms, or set of models, might be applied in today’s church, the Body of Christ.

Chapter 5

*The Final Frontier or The New Frontier
We need to conquer it, either way...*

The Challenge

In Pastor Doug Pagitt's book *Reimagining Spiritual Formation: A Week in the Life of an Experimental Church*, he explores some of the reasons why he set out on a new spiritual pilgrimage in planting Solomon's Porch Community. He states the challenge we have as the church today in the following:

Beginning with the Industrial Revolution, innovations in travel, communication, and science have changed the way we define community and live in it. Incredible advances in medicine have made life possible where once there was only death. These shifts have changed the way we think about what it means to share our lives with others and how we measure the value of life. We have revolutionized how we live and nearly all that we believe, know and understand - but much of the thinking and practices of Christianity have stubbornly stayed the same.

It seems to me that our post-industrial times require us to ask new questions, questions that people 100 years ago would have never thought needed asking. Could it be that our answers will move us to reimagine the way of Christianity in our world? Perhaps we as Christians today are not only to consider what it means to be a 21st century church, but also - and perhaps more importantly - what it means to have 21st century faith. The answers to all these questions will have an impact on how our faith communities are structured, what we do in those communities, and the practices we utilize for spiritual formation. They bear on how we experience community in daily life, how we relate to others, our faith and beyond, and even how we understand the gospel itself. ¹

I know what some readers are thinking right now, "this guy is out of his mind." But that is precisely what Pastor Doug is getting at. There are ways of doing church that we have to get out of our mind and rethink them. We have to, as he says "reimagine" them. That is a missing part of the Christian life: musing,

meditating, imagining. We should, every once in a while, re-evaluate what we ARE as a local church and what we are DOING as a local church. We are warned to not have “vain imaginations”², and of course this is not what I am saying, but we are supposed to use godly wisdom in our pursuit of excellence in ministry. Pastor Doug’s challenge is still true, though. We must find ways of doing ministry, that are still biblically-based, but are not motivated by the vestiges of the Industrial Revolution. The term, “thinking outside the box” is so common now, one has to think outside of that “thinking outside the box” to actually do the original intention of the phrase. Doug Pagitt, though has hit the proverbial nail on the head. But the real question is, how can we practically apply these principles we have looked at in the last few chapters into reality with real, imperfect people?

Another part of this challenge is in how we are seeking to apply all of the biblical “One Anothers” and the Dream Jesus wants for His church: to experience His type of loving, caring and joyful community that is described in the Gospel of John, chapters 13-17. This, indeed, is perhaps our greatest challenge. In this challenge we must find ways that can enable what is seen in Acts 2:42-47 to actually happen today in our church Body Life ministry as the norm. To experience that kind of community is paramount in our pursuit of evangelizing the world, as well. Jesus likened this unity and community as such that it would tell the whole world that God the Father sent Jesus Christ His Son into this world to redeem mankind.³ How do we go about changing the mentality of the normal “church-going consumer” into a servant-hearted disciple that is passionately in love with his Savior and seeking to obey Him by loving and edifying his fellow

brethren and is, also, seeking to make, grow, and multiply reproducing disciples for Jesus Christ?

A Proposed Solution

As we have explored the two major models of “small group” community in the last chapter, one thing might be noticed: both were motivated by Scripture. These models did not look to man first, although, some men have become proponents for these models, those original proponents looked first at God’s Word. Then by observation and much prayer, they sought to find a “way” to “flesh out” these mandates in the Bible for “how” the Church should BE, “how” it should be “structured,” and “how” it should do “ministry.” These were all based on various mandates in Scripture, from the books of *Genesis* to *Revelation*. One thing that is clear, this kind of community just does not happen by accident, it must be fostered, guided, modeled, pursued, managed, and passionately celebrated.

I personally tend to lean more toward the *cell group* approach, although I really like how Willow Creek and others have utilized the “Meta-Church” model with small groups for everything. I like to pick and choose from the best of these models and seek to come up with a workable blend that can be adaptable and flexible, while maintaining biblical community, which is what we are seeking. Developing a local church that is composed of small groups at its core is the goal. I want every born-again believer to be a part of some sort of small group that fosters the following (i.e.: “**cell group life**”):

1. Biblical Community and deepening relationships in Christ and with one another - Chapters 13-17 of the Gospel of John
2. Accountability - Ephesians 5:15-21
3. Discipleship - Matthew 28:18-20
4. Support and Encouragement for one's walk in Christ - Romans 12:9-18; Hebrews 10:24-25; Ephesians 4:11-16
5. The pursuit of obeying the "One Anothers" (i.e. love one another, pray for one another, care for one another, etc...)
6. Fellowship, as seen in Acts 2:42-47
7. Openness to inviting the "unchurched" - Matthew 28:18-20; Colossians 4:5-6
8. Multiplication of disciples and groups - Acts 6:1,7; 9:31; 12:24

This kind of cell group, or small group, can meet anywhere and can meet at anytime. It is a flexible group that can be formed around affinity, a task, or some other reason. As long as life transformation in Jesus Christ is the main goal, this kind of group can come in many shapes and colors. Notice I did not say "sizes." As we have discussed before, if the size grows so that the principle of the "span of care" is violated, then it is too large of a group. Also, with some task groups, they tend to not multiply, so this might be alright, as long as most of the people of the church are a part of the "normal" type of growing and multiplying small group.

The extension of pastoral covering and care flows through these groups, because we want to utilize the leadership support system of the 5x5 model of leadership. This model of leadership support follows the *Jethro Principle* of Leadership as seen in Exodus 18:1-6 (see also Deuteronomy 1:11-17). Leadership is really "everything" within this system of small groups.

Leadership is Everything

The leadership model we want to follow will be patterned after to the 5x5 leadership model:

1. The cell group leader and his apprentice
The leaders and apprentice care for 8 to 12 people in the group
2. The cell coach - he cares for 5 cell group leaders (oversees an average of 50 people)
3. The zone pastor - he cares for 5 cell coaches (oversees an average of 250 people)
4. The district pastor - he cares for 5 zone pastors (oversees an average of 1,250 people)
5. The senior pastoral team - oversees all the other district pastors.

This model seems to foster the greatest *span of care* within the various levels of leadership, without overtaxing any one individual. The cell group leader and his apprentice can focus on fostering that kind of *cell group life* as described earlier. The leader of the group can focus on facilitating the group meetings, follow up on various relational issues, and grooming his apprentice. The group members who are not in leadership can be in “sub”-leadership over certain areas of the group, such as the prayer time, the greeting time, the worship time, or the “snack time” (to some this “snack time” is the most important, if you know what I mean). These “sub” area leadership roles, can be launch points for future grooming for apprenticeship into becoming a small group leader. The coach can help the small group leader keep these kinds of things in the forefront of his thinking and actions.

The coach has a tremendous responsibility, that is why I think having only five cell group leaders in his “span of care” is so important. Restricting this to five

instead of ten, will help the coach be able to spend more relational time with the cell group leaders under his shepherding care. The coach will be able to spend more time visiting the groups under his care and helping to promote the great leadership of the small group leaders and their apprentices. This encouragement from the coach will help solidify the small group leader's leadership and encourage the other members of the group to rally more around the vision of the small group. It should help to create more ownership. Also, the coach can get together in one-on-one sessions, such as at lunch or at other times, to just touch base, and get to know each other better and to pray for each other, etc. The coach can also gather together his five leaders and their apprentices for some sort of "get-away," with their respective families, to just enjoy each others' fellowship.

The coach needs a coach, as well. There needs to be leadership in place that makes sure that the coach is supported well. Again, paying attention to the *span of care* principle, having a person to encourage and support the coach is invaluable. The coach is most likely someone who has a secular job, has a family to raise, and does this coaching in addition to all of his life's obligations. The coach, therefore needs sufficient support, and he needs to have someone to cover his back while he is *down in the trenches*. Let us call this "coach of coaches" by the name of "zone pastor." The "zone pastor" can be a paid full-time pastor, or a part-time pastor. In either case, at this level, the "zone pastor" can possibly be overseeing a "flock" numbering upwards toward 250 people. This is due to his overseeing and supporting the leadership of up to 5 coaches. That

can be a *mid-sized* church, in some areas of our country. In most cases, the zone pastor will have enough “givers” to support his salary from “his zone.” This zone pastor not only oversees his “zone” of coaches, but he can help to support the various cell leaders and apprentices, as well. In fact, this leader should put together either quarterly or semi-annual training seminars, conferences, or retreats for all of the people in his “zone.” Seeing that everyone can potentially become a coach or a cell group leader, these kinds of events should be promoted to all within his scope of leadership. The goal always on this leader’s mind is multiplication of disciples and multiplication of leaders at all levels. His main goal, though, is to make sure that the 5 coaches he oversees and supports get every ounce of support, encouragement, edification, prayer, exhortation, admonishment, training, and loving care that they need.

The “district pastor” oversees and supports up to 5 “zone pastors.” At this level of leadership, the *span of care* maintains the same structure of care. The district pastor’s main goal, though, is to make sure that the 5 “zone pastors” he oversees and supports get every ounce of support, encouragement, edification, prayer, exhortation, admonishment, training, and loving care that they need. Sounds pretty familiar doesn’t it? This sounds almost like the “zone pastor” description? It must be remembered that the principle of the *span of care* must continue all the way up the leadership echelon. The “district pastor,” and all of the leaders in this system, must be servant-hearted, loving, and caring shepherds who care for Jesus’ flock, the way He did. This is exactly what Jesus said in Matthew 20:27, 23:11 and John 21:15-17. He wants the leaders in His

church to be servant-leaders that tend to His lambs, His sheep, His flock. He did not want his leaders to be slaves who obey and follow orders from others who have selfish motives. Instead, Jesus wants His leaders within His church to be His servants, slaves to Him, who are available to help others grow in their relationship with Christ, to help them to understand and apply God's Word, and to help them to obey Christ. Paul's care for the church was overwhelming, as seen in what He said to the Galatian Christians in Galatians 4:19, "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you..." That type of passionate, servant-hearted leadership must be in the heart of all levels of leadership, especially at this level of the "district pastor." He must provide much shepherding care, teaching, training and equipping for all the leaders under his care. He must lead in such a way as to develop apprentices for his level of leadership, as well. Multiplication of leadership, disciples, and groups must be in the forefront of his "ways of ministry".

This type of system of *cell groups / small groups / home groups*, however one may categorize them, is probably the greatest leadership development training program on the planet. Most people in this system, probably will not even know it. But it is intentional. The view of multiplying disciples, multiplying small groups, and multiplying leadership is at the core of this thinking. Instead of looking to outside people, training from within seems to work the best. And since, any leader starts in the small group and "earns his stripes," so to speak, in relational settings that are open to investigation, each "*leader in training for the next level*" can be evaluated, monitored and have the appropriate training for the

next step, if applicable and if God is leading, etc. It is very similar to the instructions of testing and approving for deacons in 1 Timothy 3:8-13. Having a system that allows for this kind of leadership testing and approval and follows the pattern of 2 Timothy 2:2 should be every pastor's dream. We see this same kind of heart for the local church leadership in Acts 20:17-31, where Paul the apostle met with the "elders" of the church in Ephesus. In the Ephesian church's system of ministry, it was clear that leadership was to oversee the church who met "publicly and from house to house." The system of small group leadership that I am proposing is very similar to that which the church in Ephesus was using.

How can this be?

How can this model become flesh and dwell among us? This is difficult to say, in theory, but in practicality, there are quite a number of churches world-wide that are proving that it can be done successfully. None, of course, are perfect, because people are involved. I am encouraged by this and can see myself someday overseeing something similar to what is in this study: Jesus' Dream of biblical community - communion with Him and with one another in the Body of Christ, effectively reaching the world. Jesus promised when we would have the kind of community He spoke about, it would be permeated and filled with His joy. So a characteristic of such small groups would be joyful fun. They would not always be somber and "top-heavy" with knowledge transfer, but filled with life transformation as we seek to experience the Presence, the Power, and Purpose of Jesus Christ our Lord.

I think the best way to spread this “message” of small group community is by passionately sharing it one-on-one with others prayerfully being led by God’s Spirit. I would then seek to invite those believers who are curious into that newly formed small group community. I have often said, that if a person has never tasted a grape, describing the taste to them is almost useless. To what can you relate grape taste to? What types of things have they tasted, that tastes similar to grape? The best thing to do, is just hand them a grape, and let them taste it. In the same way, through much prayer, I will need to be passionate, level headed, loving and tactful in sharing this concept with others. The next step is to help those who are open to this to see that it is biblical, that it is founded on Scripture and in the very nature of God and how we are designed as humans. Then I will seek to ask them to pray about it and seek to invite them to a small group that seeks to foster “cell group life.”

I would have to say, from anything that I have read in Scripture and have sought to then share what I have learned with others, I have almost always started in prayer. I want to seek God’s face passionately and ask Him to help me to share it effectively and fruitfully with others. Also, I would ask Him to lead me to those who will be the pioneers and early adopters to what He will show me. The principle that the apostle Paul shared with Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:2 still applies today, “And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.” I pray to God that somehow His church which He purchased with His blood, would become the church that Jesus prayed for in John 13-17.

Once a “first group” or “proto-group” is formed and multiplies, this would be the time to re-evaluate how the model is working, and prayerfully and lovingly seek to adjust anything that needs adjusting so that we can more effectively fulfill the mandates of Christ for His Church in our context. As these groups multiply, implementing a cycle of training and retreats would be the next stage of development in structure. This is needed so that leadership development and multiplication can start to take place. It is a must that a good foundation of leadership is trained and *on-board* to allow the continued growth and multiplication of these groups.

As these groups multiply to a point where there is enough trained leadership to handle the rest of the church being folded into new groups, that would be a good time to announce that “we have small groups available for you.” We must have a solid foundation of enough leadership, zone pastors, coaches, cell leaders and apprentices, that will allow for the influx of many new people into these new small groups. The focus must be to recruit and train new leadership all the time, and never let up until Jesus Christ comes back. The evangelistic thrust and vision must always be in the forefront of everything we do. If people are not coming in the front door of the church and of the cell group, then we will not be fulfilling our purpose: to make, grow, and multiply reproducing disciples - which then causes the cell groups to grow and multiply. That is why we always will have a need for growing and multiplying all levels of leadership.

This is a great challenge and vision, but since it is both biblical and is most definitely found in the heart of God Himself, we cannot lose if we seek to do all of this for His glory alone. All that we do, as the Body of Christ, must be for His glory and for the health of His Church, the Body of Christ; otherwise, we are just spinning our wheels and our small groups in all directions. AMEN.

(This Page Is Intentionally Blank)

END NOTES

Chapter 1

1. see Genesis 3:22; 11:6-7; Isaiah 6:1-8.
2. see Genesis 2:24.
3. see 1 Corinthians 3:11 and Ephesians 2:20.
4. see John 13:34-35.
5. Ralph W. Neighbour, Jr., *Where Do We Go From Here?* (Houston, TX: TOUCH Publications, 2000), p113. (Quoting from M. Scott Peck, *The Different Drum* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987) 59.).
6. see Matthew 9:17; Mark 2:22; Luke 5:37-39.

Chapter 2

1. see Luke 6:13.
2. see Matthew 17:1-9.
3. see Matthew 26:36-46; Mark 14:32-42; and Luke 22:39-46.
4. William A. Beckham, *The Second Reformation* (Houston, TX: TOUCH Publications, 1997) 63.
5. Joel Comiskey, *Reap the Harvest* (Houston, TX: TOUCH Publications, 1999) 109.
6. Bill Donahue and Russ Robinson, *Building a Church OF Small Groups* (Grand Rapids, MI: Willow Creek Association / Zondervan Publishers, 2001), pp. 45-49.
7. Ibid, pg 45.
8. see John 13:34-35.

Chapter 3

1. see John 10:23; Acts 3:11, and Acts 5:12.
2. see Acts 20:18-21.
3. see Exodus 18:1-26; also see Deuteronomy 1:11-17.
4. Beckham, pp. 42-43.
5. Joel Comiskey. "Cell History Part 2",
http://members.tripod.com/celycecomiskey/cell_history-pt_2.htm
(accessed 4 March 2006).
6. Neighbour, pp. 185-187.

END NOTES (continued...)

Chapter 4

1. The Words of Eternal Life. "The Origin and History Of Sunday School: From England to the United States"
http://www.thewordsofeternallife.com/sunday_school.html
(accessed 10 March 2006).
2. Calvary Chapel of Costa Mesa. "Complete History",
<http://www.calvarychapelcostamesa.org/low/aboutus/completehistory.php> And
<http://www.calvarychapelcostamesa.org/high/images/historyofcalvary.pdf>
(accessed 5 March 2006).
3. Neighbour, pp. 44-56.
4. Linus J. Morris, *The High Impact Church* (Houston: TOUCH Publications, 1993) pp. 151-152.
5. Antioch Networks International. "What ever happened to Ralph Neighbour",
<http://www.antioch.com.sg/article.php?story=20050109191039727>
(accessed 4 March 2006).
6. Joel Comiskey, *Reap the Harvest* (Houston: TOUCH Publications, 1999) pp. 137-143.
7. Bill Donahue and Russ Robinson, pp. 11-16.
8. Ibid, 55.

Chapter 5

1. Doug Pagitt, *Reimagining Spiritual Formation*
(El Cajon, CA: emergentYS Books, 2003) pp. 21-21.
2. see Romans 1:21 and 2 Corinthians 10:3-5.
3. see John 13:34-35; 15:1-16; 17:1-26.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Allen, Roland. *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church*. Grand Rapids, MI: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1984.
- Beckham, William A. *The Second Reformation: Reshaping the Church for the 21st Century*. Houston, TX: TOUCH Publications, 1995.
- Boren, M. Scott and Dr. Don Tillman. *Making Cell Groups Work*. Houston, TX: Cell Group Resources, a division of TOUCH Publications, 2002.
- Comiskey, Joel. *Home Cell Group Explosion*. Houston, TX: TOUCH Publications, 1999.
- Comiskey, Joel. *How to be a GREAT Cell Group Coach*. Houston, TX: TOUCH Publications, 2003.
- Comiskey, Joel. *How to Lead a Great Cell Group Meeting, so people want to come back*. Houston, TX: TOUCH Publications, 2001.
- Comiskey, Joel. *Leadership Explosion*. Houston, TX: TOUCH Publications, 2000.
- Comiskey, Joel. *Reap the Harvest*. Houston, TX: TOUCH Publications, 1999.
- Donahue, Bill and Russ Robinson. *Building a Church OF Small Groups*. Grand Rapids, MI: Willow Creek Association / Zondervan Publishers, 2001.
- Donahue, Bill and Russ Robinson. *The Seven Deadly Sins of Small Group Ministry*. Grand Rapids, MI: Willow Creek Association / Zondervan Publishers, 2002.
- Elliot, Ralph H. *Church Growth that Counts*. Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1982.
- Finnell, Dr. David. *Life in His Body*. Houston, TX: TOUCH Publications, 1995.
- Hull, Bill. *Jesus Christ: Disciplemaker*. Colorado Springs, CO: NAVPRESS, 1984.
- McBride, Chris and others. *Reaching College Students through Cells*. Houston, TX: TOUCH Publications, 1997.
- Moore, Walyon B. *Multiplying Disciples: the New Testament methods for church growth*. Colorado Springs, CO: NAVPRESS, 1983.
- Morris, Linus J. *The High Impact Church*. Houston, TX: TOUCH Publications, 1993.
- Neighbour, Ralph W., Jr. *Knocking on Doors . . . Opening Hearts*. Houston, TX: TOUCH Publications, 1990.
- Neighbour, Ralph W., Jr. *The Shepherd's Guidebook*. Houston, TX: TOUCH Publications, 1992.

BIBLIOGRAPHY (continued...)

Neighbour, Ralph W., Jr. *Where Do We Go From Here?*
Houston, TX: TOUCH Publications, 2000.

Pagitt, Doug. *Reimagining Spiritual Formation*. El Cajon, CA: emergentYS Books
(published by Zondervan Publishers, Grand Rapids, MI), 2003.

Rainer, Thom. *Effective Evangelistic Churches*.
Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996.

Sanders, J. Oswald. *Spiritual Leadership*. Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1980.