

## DOES YOUR GROUP NEED TO MULTIPLY?

After experiencing healthy, biblical community in a small group, the thought of anyone leaving that community is hard. We want to keep what we are experiencing for as long as we can. However, the only way to make room for more people to connect to life in Christ and be encouraged to Love God, Love Others, and Live Sent is by creating new groups for them to participate in!

### **From Addition TO Multiplication**

We see addition in the early church in Acts 2:47: “Every day the Lord **added** to their number those who were being saved.” For an initial period of your small group, you will add new people to the group. This addition will work until the group is at a critical mass and space becomes an issue. You may be able to subdivide for a time, but to make room for new people, addition will have to change to multiplication.

We see this critical change in the early church in Acts 6:7: “So the preaching about God flourished, the number of the disciples in Jerusalem **multiplied** greatly, and a large group of priests became obedient to the faith”. They were experiencing exponential growth and had to change their systems and mindset to minister through that growth. *Their addition changed to multiplication!*

Of course, multiplying your small group will take time. It may take 12-24 months of growth before your group is ready to birth a new group, but the key is to prepare early for that eventual new group launch. ***Here are three steps to eventually multiply your small group.***

### **1) Develop an Apprentice**

The first step toward launching a new group is identifying someone in your group to be an apprentice. This is someone maturing as a believer and taking ownership in the group. He/she may not recognize their leadership potential yet, so you will need to affirm the gifts you see in them.

This process will eventually lead to birthing a new group. The apprentice can either step out of the current group to lead a group for new people, or you can turn the leadership of the current group over as you step out to launch the new group. This scenario can set the apprentice up for success quicker. He/she is already comfortable with the current group, and you will be more prepared to start over.

### **2) Celebrate the Birth**

After a child is born, families celebrate together. After all, it's a joyous event to welcome a new life into the world! In the same way, you should celebrate when a new small group leader is developed and a group is birthed out of yours. It will be an adjustment to send off a leader who has become an integral part of the group, so the group members need to be reminded of the “why” behind multiplying.

Many potential apprentices are hesitant to step into the process because of the feeling of loss when they leave. The birth of the new group does not mean that fellowship with the leader stepping out ceases to exist. A part of the celebration should be the commitment to continue as a larger family meeting in different locations. You should also continue to meet with the new leader to coach them through leading the new group.

### 3) Start Over

The opportunity to start over will follow the successful birth of a new group. If you have handed over the reins of leadership to an apprentice, this is your opportunity to build new biblical community. Paul talked about creating multiple generations of disciples in 2 Timothy 2:2: “What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, commit to faithful men who will teach others also.”

If you look closely, you see four generations of disciples! Paul is the first generation. He invested in the life of Timothy—that’s number two. Then Timothy was to commit what he learned from Paul to faithful men—that’s the third one. Finally, the faithful men are to teach others also—generation number four!

*This is how you and your apprentice will carry out the words of Jesus in the Great Commission. Your small group can literally change the world. That is worth the effort of multiplying and starting over!*