

Praise for

8 Habits of Effective Small Group Leaders

“Here’s the bottom line: If you practice Dave Earley’s 8 habits as a small group leader, you will successfully lead and multiply your group. Pastor — Getting your group leaders practicing these skills will mean success for your church at reaching lost people while discipling and pastoring your members through your small group structure. What Dave Earley does do is break it down into bite-sized pieces that any sincere small group leader can master. Sign me up for the first 100 copies that come off the presses. I want every one of my group leaders to read this book again and again.”

JAY FIREBAUGH

Senior Pastor, Clearpoint Church in Houston, TX

“Outstanding! Practical and proven steps, workable tools, and inspiring stories make this a MUST READ book for anyone who has anything to do with small groups.

Dave Earley has done an excellent job of capturing the essence of what it takes to be an effective small group leader!”

KAREN HURSTON

Author and Director, Hurston Ministries

“Do not ignore the powerful instructions in this book. Practicing these habits will ignite your small group and revolutionize your ministry.

Each chapter contains a treasure chest of practical insights that you can pull out and use today.”

DR. RALPH W. NEIGHBOUR, JR.

Author and Founder, TOUCH® Outreach Ministries

“Earley’s book is necessary reading for group leaders who desire to grow spiritually and who need a plan to see growth in the groups they lead. This easy to read book is practical, profound, and highly relevant. Many readers who have seen their small group ministries grow will recognize some of the 8 Habits.

Earley puts all 8 habits together in a coherent, interesting, and highly readable package.”

MIKEL NEUMANN

Author of Home Groups for Urban Cultures

Praise for

8 Habits of Effective Small Group Leaders

“If you want to be successful as a small group leader and gain a full understanding of all that it will take to accomplish that goal, then you simply must read this book. It is very thorough and practical, and it comes from years of experience.”

MIKE SHEPHERD

*National Director, Small Group Development
Serendipity House, Inc.*

“The most often-posed question I have been asked to answer is ‘How can I incorporate group life and leadership into my hectic schedule?’ Before I read this book, this was a tough question. Now, I have 8 great suggestions and Dave Earley to thank.”

RANDALL NEIGHBOUR

Author and President, TOUCH® Outreach Ministries

“Dave Earley hits the nail on the head with *The 8 Eight Habits of Effective Small Group Leaders*. This book will help arouse the “sleeping giants” of small group leaders by giving them specific action steps to take in an easy to follow format. In my experience, whenever these habits are practiced consistently, growth and multiplication occur. Great job!”

BILLY HORNSBY

Author and Director, Association of Related Churches

8 HABITS

OF EFFECTIVE SMALL GROUP LEADERS

Transforming Your Ministry Outside the Meeting

BY DAVE EARLEY



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FOREWORD

I first met Dave Earley twenty years ago when he was an undergraduate student at Liberty University with a vision of planting a church in Greater Columbus, Ohio. That original vision has never wavered, and now it has been fulfilled. Today, there is a wonderful church in Columbus, Ohio; however, the vision does not stop there. The original vision of one church has become a 20/20 vision of planting twenty more churches in the area in the next twenty years. I believe he will do it; let me tell you why.

When Dave Earley graduated from Liberty University in 1985, I publicly predicted Dave would plant and grow the largest church in America of any of our graduates. Some might have thought that our graduates who were powerful pulpiteers or great fund-raisers would build greater churches. But I stood by my prediction because Dave has discipline in his personal life, in his handling of finances, and in his commitment to reach the “Boomer” population (when Dave went to Columbus, he was able to reach and win young families).

Today the church has had two thousand in attendance on special days and a weekly offering of over \$40,000.00. Read this book carefully to learn how your church can do the same thing.

First, Dave believes in team ministry, he and four other graduates from Liberty University and Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary have worked hard to fulfill their initial vision of planting a vibrant church in Greater Columbus. After sixteen years the team is still together — that’s unparalleled in Christian work. Even though Chris Brown, the original youth pastor, has gone to start his own work in Columbus, he is still a part of the original team and a part of their 20/20 vision. A high school student that was reached by Chris Brown — Matthew Chittum — has graduated from Liberty University and is now planting a church in the Greater Columbus area. Dave’s team has a good start on their vision, two churches of their 20/20 vision have already been planted.

The small group concept that Dave Earley describes in this book is not a theoretical one. He began the first small group of the church in his home when

he arrived in 1985. He has done everything he asks you to do in small group ministry.

The church has grown through small groups. Some people came to the church through the small groups, others came to the main service, but they have been “bonded” to the church through involvement in small groups.

If you do not read anything else in this book make sure you read and apply chapter eight, “Be Committed To Personal Growth.” Dave tells you how he has personally grown in Christ and spells out a personal growth plan that you can follow. Outstanding!

The last thing I want to say about this book is that it is written well. I should have expected it knowing that Dave does everything with commitment. You will learn a lot without wasting time reading non-essentials. You will get more out of the book because it is done well . . . to the point . . . and in an interesting manner.

Enjoy learning *The 8 Habits of Effective Small Group Leaders*.

Sincerely yours in Christ,
Elmer L. Towns, Dean
School of Religion
Liberty University
Lynchburg, Virginia

INTRODUCTION

Why do some small groups grow and multiply while others do not? Is there some activity or set of activities a small group leader can do to increase the probability of the group growing and multiplying? If so, are these activities beyond the reach of the average small group leader? Will it take years of training to master them? Or, is there a set of activities that are attainable and realistic that any small group leader who wants to grow and multiply can put into his or her weekly schedule?

I believe I have an answer to these questions. I have had the privilege of leading small groups and coaching small group leaders for twenty-five years. It began when, as a 16-year old, several friends and I started lunchtime Bible studies at our high school. They “accidentally” grew and multiplied. In college, I started a discipleship group that spread over the campus. During my summers, I started groups in little towns in England and in high rises in New York City. After I graduated, I started groups in rural Virginia. Then, I was hired to train, write curriculum for, and oversee 300 small group leaders at a large Christian university. Later, I started a group in my basement that grew into a church with over one hundred groups.

Some of these various groups grew and multiplied; others did not. Through the years, I have noticed the long-range effectiveness of leaders revolves around simple habits that those leaders practice outside of the group meeting.

Many leaders sincerely want to grow and multiply their groups, but they are not sure how. They work on finding better icebreakers or asking better discussion questions. While these are valuable things, the real key to growing and multiplying a small group lies in the practice of eight personal habits.

Several years ago, I wanted to show the leaders I was coaching exactly what it would take for them to be highly effective. By studying small group ministry and thinking through my own experience I came up with eight regular practices that seemed to make the difference between effectiveness and

ineffectiveness. I put them into a concise list of eight habits that would enhance the effectiveness of a small group leader.

I began asking the leaders I coached to adopt these habits and build them into their weekly schedules. Without exception, those who used these habits became highly effective leaders who grew and multiplied their groups. Those who did not, did not. What was especially interesting was that gifts, personality, and experience were not as important as commitment to the eight habits. Leaders who did not have the gift of teaching or had not been Christians for a long time but who followed the eight habits became effective. Leaders who tended to be quiet or had never led before but who practiced the habits were growing and multiplying their group. The eight habits made the difference.

After teaching these habits for several years, I have come to several conclusions:

1. The eight habits work. Following the eight habits of an effective small group leader makes all the difference between mediocrity and greatness, between stagnation and multiplication. Following them will produce growth, develop future leaders, and add to what God wants to do.

2. The eight habits are universal. They apply to all cultures and all types of groups. They are foundational principles that work for any type of group and any type of leader. They are usable with any group of people whatever their age, race, gender, or socioeconomic status. They can be lived in the inner city or on the farm. They work for those on a college campus, those in a foreign nation, and those in the suburbs of the U.S.

Although some see a distinction between “small groups” and “cell groups,” in this book the terms are treated interchangeably. This is because the eight habits are universal and apply to both.

3. The eight habits have broad application. One beautiful fact is that they are essentially the same habits that produce effectiveness for coaches of small group leaders, zone directors, and small group pastors. Once a leader incorporates them, he or she has the foundation for moving up the levels of small group leadership.

4. These habits are easy to understand and remember. I have seen small group leaders’ eyes light up as their mentors explain the eight habits to them. Leaders nod their head and say, “Yes. I see. That’s simple enough. It’s just common sense.”

5. The best quality of these habits is that they are doable. Any leader can put them into practice, if he invests the time. When small group leaders hear the habits explained, they nod, saying things like, “This is just what I have been looking for. Now I have a clear course to follow. I can do this.”

6. The eight habits are realistic. Most leaders can fit them into their busy

schedules. It does not take a spiritual giant or someone with unlimited time to do them. These eight habits are attainable goals for all small group leaders.

7. The eight habits are motivating. Upon learning them, leaders burn with the passion to put them into practice. The eight habits are challenging, but not overwhelming.

The eight habits can take a small group leader, and those under him or her, to a new level. Whether an apprentice leader, a novice small group leader, a seasoned leader, a coach of small group leaders, a director of a district of groups, or a pastor of a large small group ministry, the eight habits will work. These habits lead to fruitfulness and multiplication. The eight habits will help leaders, and those under them, experience greater fulfillment in ministry.

The Eight Habits of Effective Small Group Leaders

1. Dream of leading a healthy, growing, multiplying group.
2. Pray for group members daily.
3. Invite new people to visit the group weekly.
4. Contact group members regularly.
5. Prepare for the group meeting.
6. Mentor an apprentice leader.
7. Plan group fellowship activities.
8. Be committed to personal growth.