

PRAISE FOR FROM 12 TO 3

“As a missionary, I have been waiting for this book. It is a contextualized approach to G-12, and it will be a great resource for the Cell Church Movement.”

LAURENCE SINGLEHURST
DIRECTOR, CELL UK MINISTRIES

“Our human tendency is to think that if we can just find the right model for doing church, we will become successful. Rather than presenting G-12.3 as a ‘secret formula’ to follow, Joel Comiskey provides practical insight in how to effectively adapt G-12 principles rather than to simply adopt a particular G-12 model. This is a ‘must read’ for leaders who desire to implement the G-12 strategy while at the same time remaining faithful to the unique plan God had given them to fulfill.”

GERALD E. MARTIN
CORNERSTONE CHURCH & MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

“Joel Comiskey is clearly one of the leading thinkers and writers on the Cell Church Movement around the world. In this book, Joel does an excellent job of further explaining the principles of the ‘G-12 model’ and how they can be applied wisely to each unique church and ministry.”

MARK CONNER
SENIOR MINISTER, WAVERLY CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

“God has worked through Joel Comiskey to help many cell church pastors throughout the world. Pastors in Korea have found great insight and wisdom through Joel’s books. I have been waiting for this new book for a long time—every cell church pastor should be handed this book! I pray that the G-12.3 vision as it is presented here will edify and multiply the Kingdom of God everywhere.”

PAUL JEONG
PRESIDENT, TOUCH KOREA

PRAISE FOR FROM 12 TO 3

“To every pastor who cannot ‘adopt’ ICM’s model of the G-12, here is a creative approach to adapting the successful principles that have made ICM and other churches successful. Joel Comiskey cites many examples of how, once these principles are implemented, any church can experience growth in discipleship and evangelism. The G-12.3 is a very workable model for modern America. I believe in the ‘Principle of Twelve’ but know from years of ministry that it must constantly evolve to keep up with what God is doing on the earth as new cultural trends emerge.”

BILLY HORNSBY

DIRECTOR OF THE ASSOCIATION OF RELATED CHURCHES

“In this book, Joel Comiskey introduces the next important piece of the dialogue concerning the G-12 cell church: principles. In Chapter One, Comiskey establishes the necessity of understanding the G-12 model from its underlying roots. This book will help readers grasp the G-12 principles that are necessary to understand current models and implement the G-12 structure or a modification of it, such as Comiskey’s G-12.3.”

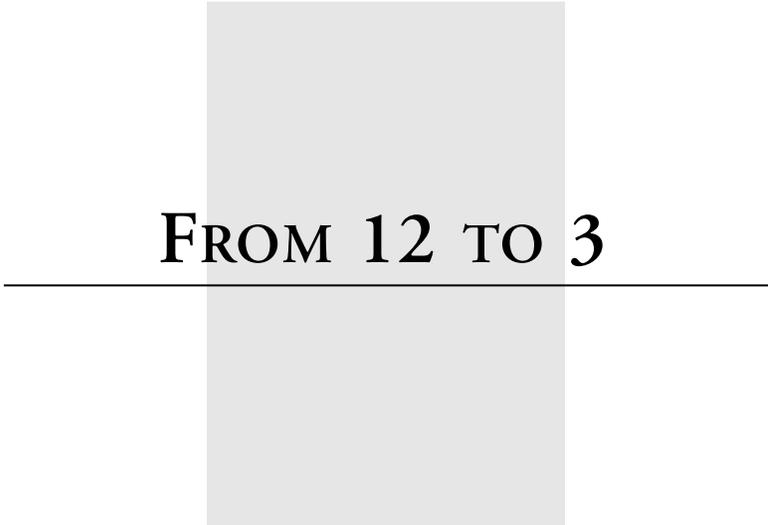
BILL BECKHAM

DIRECTOR, TOUCH GLOBAL

“Joel Comiskey has the heartbeat of what is happening in the cell church around the world. He clearly communicates G-12 principles and explains how to make them work in various local settings. This practical guide will prove invaluable for any G-12 strategy.”

LARRY KREIDER

DIRECTOR, DOVE CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP INTERNATIONAL



FROM 12 TO 3

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HOW TO APPLY G-12 PRINCIPLES IN YOUR CHURCH

JOEL COMISKEY



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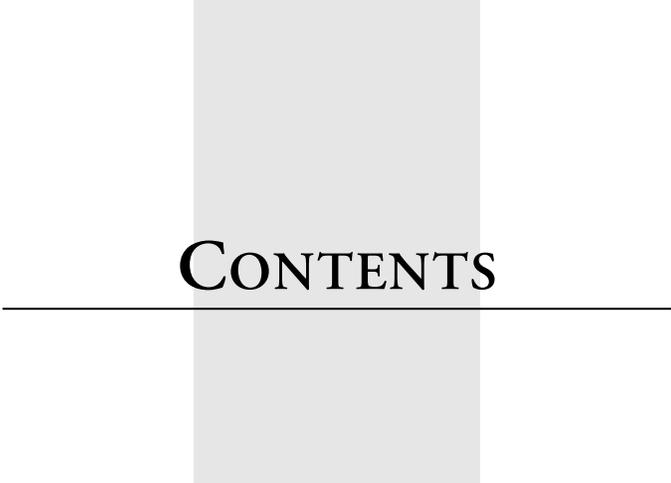
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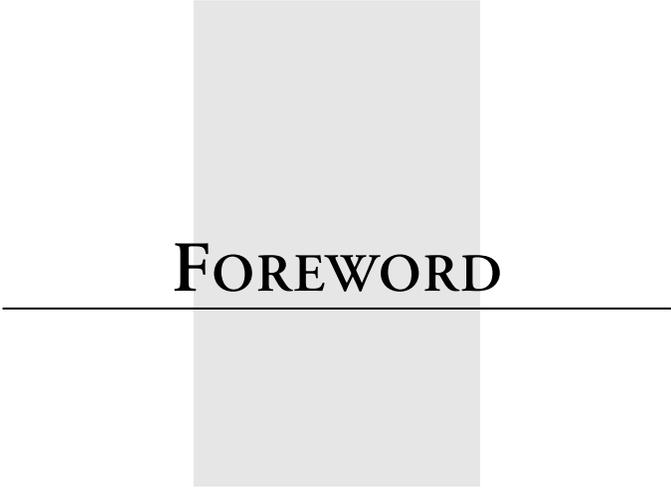


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FOREWORD

As a young pastor, Yonggi Cho received a vision from God to commission Christians to become cell group leaders. He created cell church patterns through many years of trial and error, floundering for a number of years until he found the best pattern for Korea. His cells then doubled, and doubled again. At present, Pastor Cho shepherds the largest church in the world and supports missionaries all over the Earth to reach Koreans overseas. The phenomenal growth Yoido Full Gospel Church experienced came after much prayer, testing, and Spirit-given guidance. We can observe the results YFGC has had because it is now in its fourth decade. The growth is largely through conversions.

Many pastors, including myself, followed Pastor Cho's pattern of structuring cell groups as "Basic Christian Communities." The Korean pattern is called the "Five by Five" structure for managing cell groups. I learned it and applied it in Singapore, where I worked with Faith Community Baptist Church and watched it grow from around 600

members to over 7,000 in a period of five years. FCBC's cell life was very different from that of the cells at YFGC. Cell members at YFGC focused on Bible study and Pastor Cho taught the "lessons" to the cell leaders himself. YFGC added fellowship and evangelism to the cell meetings, and it was appropriate for Korean culture. At FCBC, Biblical teaching took place during our Sunday services and cell group meetings focused on edification. The management systems were the same, but cell life was very different. Our conversion rate was five people per day, month in and month out.

Dion Robert, senior pastor of the Works and Mission Baptist Church in the Ivory Coast listened to a reading of Pastor Cho's book, *More Than Numbers*, caught the principles, and formed his cells around an African culture that is filled with animistic demon possession. This culture requires cell groups to minister to the deep needs of demonized people. In twenty years, Pastor Robert grew his church to over 120,000 members. Unlike the churches in Korea and Singapore, his central complex of buildings includes a 24-hour-a-day clinic for casting out demons. His management structure is nothing like Pastor Cho's. Few have sought to implement it outside of the Ivory Coast, but the Works and Mission has branches in France, Denmark, and 18 other nations.

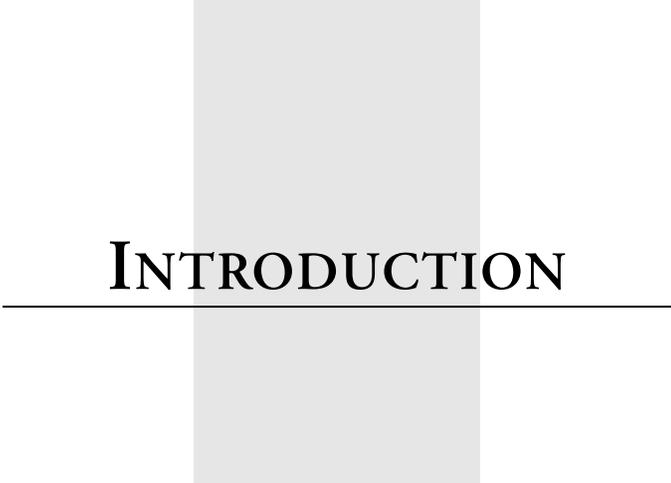
In El Salvador, another pastor examined the Korean model and adjusted it to his Central American republic. At Elim church, they conduct two cell meetings each week: one for edification and one for evangelism. The present pastor replaced the founder, but the cell groups, managed by a "Five by Five" structure, have never slowed down. Elim has penetrated the entire nation and is even spreading all over the world, numbering 120,000 in the mother church. The cell structure was not built on the powerful personality of a man, but on the principle of equipping all believers to evangelize. Although Pastor Vega mentors his churches carefully, they work best in a Latin American culture.

In recent years, another form of cell management has developed in Bogota, Colombia. Formed in the hearts of César and Claudia Castellanos, the system, organized on a “Principle of Twelve,” was largely developed with the assistance of César Fajardo and his wife. This new pattern has captivated many people in many nations. As reported in this book, the development of the International Charismatic Mission is one of moist clay being molded and shaped to harvest in a Latin American community.

Dr. Joel Comiskey has reported on the progress of that movement throughout this book. We pray God’s richest blessings upon César and Claudia Castellanos, who were entrusted with the “Principle of Twelve.” It may be exactly right for you, and if so, they are happy to take you in hand and direct you as you implement their strategy. They strongly mentor all who intend to adopt it. Remember, however, that for many years they were adapting, revising, and changing the vision so rapidly that they did not want to put into print what they were doing. When clay is wet and not yet hardened by the years, it can be continually reshaped and adjusted. The “Principle of Twelve” is now official; books are being written about the patterns César and Claudia Castellanos have created.

Dr. Comiskey, the author of this book, has sought to pay great respect to the “mother church” of the “Principle of Twelve.” As he absorbed it through many trips to ICM, he saw ways it needed to be tweaked or improved to be appropriate to the ministry he was developing in Ecuador. His presentation, chapter by chapter, leaves you free to either completely adopt the “pure” G-12 model, or to consider the ways it can be adjusted to fit specific issues. His concept of “G-12.3” may be what God will use to help you and your church move into a mighty harvest. That is the desire of the author. Celebrate with me his clarity and recommendations.

Ralph W. Neighbour
Houston, Texas



INTRODUCTION

One pastor who struggled with his cell church recently came back from a G-12 conference saying, “I was a blind man without vision before the conference. Now I can see, and what I see excites me; we are pressing on with what God has put on our hearts...in Bogota, they believe and hold on to the values one hundred percent! They really believe everyone has the potential to be a leader. They really believe that everyone can be a spiritual parent.”¹ Many churches are seeing the G-12 care structure as a breath of fresh air. There is a grass-roots power to it that brings ministry down to where people live, work, and breathe.

The G-12 vision is spreading. Bethany World Prayer Center, one of the most prominent cell churches in the U.S., has decided to fully implement the G-12 model. Faith Community Baptist Church (FCBC) in Singapore has also decided to commit to the G-12 model. During their February 2002 G-12 conference with Pastor Castellanos, FCBC officially ‘dismantled’ the geographical organization

of cells according to districts. Just like Bethany World Prayer Center, they are now using a system of homogeneous networks. FCBC's senior pastor, Lawrence Khong, has a vision to plant one hundred thousand cells in the next ten years.² Pastor Khong gave the following reasons for the change to the G-12 structure:

- G-12 provides a system for long-term relationships and leadership training.
- Evangelism is disciple-making, not just a one-time event.
- Homogeneous groups are stronger than geographical groups.
- Every person can lead a cell group.

Colin Dye, pastor of the 10,000 member Kensington Temple Church in London, England, is fully committed to the G-12 strategy. He believes that every church should follow the G-12 vision.³ He says, "It represents for us today the restoration of true apostolic and governmental authority and spiritual effectiveness to the body of Christ on earth."⁴

Most likely your church also needs a jump-start. I believe that you can fine-tune your cell church vision with the G-12 strategy. But I want this book to be more than a quick-fix. My prayer is that it will clarify your questions and help you to take the next step in your cell church transition.

WHY ANOTHER BOOK ON G-12?

My first book, *Groups of Twelve: A New Way to Mobilize Leaders and Multiply Groups in your Church* (TOUCH Publications, 1999), described what was happening at the International Charismatic Mission in Bogota, Colombia. It elaborated on the key G-12 principles, and what churches are doing to apply those principles. I would recommend that you read my first G-12 book if you seek to gain a foundational understanding of the subject.

This current book will take you beyond the last one. I am writing this current book for two major reasons.

The First Book Was More Descriptive

The first book was an in-depth case study of ICM in Bogota, Colombia. The first six chapters described ICM's vision, values, cell groups, G-12 system, training track, and multiplication success.⁵

I am writing this book because some readers stopped after Chapter 6 and thought I was prescribing ICM's model, when in reality I was encouraging application of the principles that the second part of the book emphasized. Some people felt I was promoting the need to adopt the entire G-12 package. Consider one person's response to my first G-12 book:

About six years ago, our church moved from PBD [program based design] toward cells and implemented 5x5. After struggling with that format, our pastor began looking for something more for us. He encouraged cell leaders to read your book and eventually that 'system' was adopted exactly as it was from the first half of the book, and the leadership struggled to move our cells into that direction...The first six chapters of your book describe how ICM has organized and the rest of your book provides wisdom about what can be learned from ICM and applied in other places (the principles)...how many people do you know read only the first half of the instructions and think they have it?⁶

This book is not a description of ICM or how to implement its exact model. Many churches are already doing that. This book is designed to help you to implement the guiding principles of G-12 to your unique church situation.

My Evolution with G-12 Principles

My understanding of the G-12 system has evolved since I wrote the last book; I have learned so many new, practical lessons since then that I felt compelled to write them down.

My journey toward understanding the G-12 model first began in 1975, when I began leading my first cell group. Each week, friends and family gathered to apply Scripture. In 1983, I planted a church in downtown Long Beach, California and implemented Pastor Cho's cell group philosophy based on his success at Yoido Full Gospel Church in Seoul, Korea. In 1991, as a missionary in Quito, Ecuador, I began a cell group ministry among university students at El Batan Church that exploded to include the rest of the church. In 1994, my wife and I, along with two pastors from El Batan Church, planted a cell-based church in Quito called the Republic Church.

From 1995-1997, I wrote my doctoral thesis on the cell church movement worldwide, which included ICM. In 1996, as part of my research, I spent ten days living inside ICM in an extra room they converted into an apartment for visitors. That first visit initiated a yearly pilgrimage to ICM to learn their principles so that I could introduce others to the G-12 concept.

In 1997, I returned to the church I had co-founded in Quito to help give direction to a new cell church vision. The Republic Church exploded to over 275 cell groups and 1300 people attending cells. In 2000, I left the pastoral team and began to minister to other churches in Quito to help them make the cell church transition. Since I was living and working in Ecuador as a missionary with the Christian and Missionary Alliance, I had ample opportunity to apply what I first saw at ICM.

The Republic Church invited members of Pastor Castellanos G-12 group to minister in our church and give advice. Even so, we were not content with copying someone else's model. We wrestled

with how to apply G-12 principles in our context. We wanted to develop our own G-12 vision.

My family and I recently helped start a cell church in Southern California, and I am coaching five additional pastors in the Southern California area who are transitioning to the cell church model. In each of the churches with whom I am currently consulting, I have discovered the need to apply G-12 principles in a slightly different way because each church has a distinct culture and each church is at a different place in its journey.⁷

These differences made me realize the need to adapt G-12 principles to unique environments. One size does not fit all. No two churches are exactly the same, and thus each requires a different starting point and different methods.

I believe strongly in G-12 principles, but I am first and foremost an advocate of the cell church. First I encourage churches to become cell churches, then I teach them to fine-tune their cell church experiences through G-12 principles.

From these G-12 principles, I have developed a cell church structure that I call the G-12.3, which will be fully explained in Chapter 3. Such a structure has proven to provide more flexibility in various settings. I developed this adapted G-12 structure while working with the pastoral team in Ecuador. Subsequently, I have helped many churches small and large apply G-12 principles through the use of the G-12.3.

G-12 TERMINOLOGY

Most of the initial confusion about G-12 groups comes from the terminology. I think it is always better to use a phrase that gives immediate clarity, rather than one that demands a definition.⁸

- G-12: a team of cell leaders. I would encourage you, in fact, to use ‘team gathering’ or ‘leadership group’ instead of G-12 group.
- Cell Group: a group of 4-15 people that meets weekly outside the church building for the purpose of evangelism and discipleship with the goal of multiplication.
- Cell Church: a church driven by cell groups and where celebration and cell are equally important.
- ICM: the International Charismatic Mission, located in Bogota, Colombia. This is the cell church that originated the G-12 leadership care structure.
- Pastor César Castellanos: the founding pastor of ICM and the person who initially received the G-12 vision.
- YFGC: Yoido Full Gospel Church, located in Seoul, Korea. This church is the largest church in the world and grew that way through cell groups.
- Pastor Yonggi Cho: the senior pastor of YFGC and the person who originally received the cell church vision and creator of the 5x5 model of leadership care.

HOW THE BOOK IS STRUCTURED

This book is divided into four major sections. Chapters 1 through 5 explain how to apply the G-12 model in a simple and understandable way. This section will define the G-12 strategy and help both pastors and lay leaders to apply it. Section Two, Chapters 6 through 8, examines key values of the G-12 strategy, including prayer, Encounter Retreats, and the belief that everyone can facilitate a cell group. The third section, consisting of Chapters 9 through 11, lays out the practical nuts and bolts of the G-12 strategy, explaining homogenous networks, G-12 material, and the G-12 meeting. The fourth and final section, Chapters 12 and 13, applies G-12.3

principles to a wide variety of churches and church situations. There is also an appendix, in which you will find sample G-12 lessons.

There are several different ways that this book can be used:

1. Start at the beginning and read the entire book to gain a complete understanding of how to use and apply G-12 principles in your church.
2. Skip to the chapter or chapters that address the areas where your church needs specific development. For example, if you are confused about how to apply G-12 principles or the G-12.3 strategy in a particular stage of development, skip to Chapters 12 and 13.
3. Read through the book with other leaders and coaches and discuss what you are learning.



MAKING SENSE

OF THE G-12 SYSTEM

1

G-12 PRINCIPLES OR G-12 MODEL?

The G-12 strategy has become a powerful tool to refine the cell church worldwide. The amazing growth of ICM in Bogota, Colombia has generated a great deal of excitement because of the simple yet powerful strategy God gave them. If and when this excitement moves a church to respond, that church typically follows one of two paths:

- It follows the entire G-12 model.

Current examples of this approach are Harvest Assembly in Virginia Beach, Virginia, the Christian Center in Guayaquil, Ecuador, Kensington Temple Church in England, and Bethany World Prayer Center in Baker, Louisiana. These churches follow the G-12 model in its entirety, exactly like ICM does.

- It applies the guiding G-12 principles.

Examples abound of churches that have chosen to follow G-12 principles, rather than to adopt the entire model. In my last G-12 book, I dedicated two chapters to highlighting twelve case-study churches. Of those twelve, ten adapted the G-12 strategy to their particular situations, applying the underlying principles rather than the entire model. Two examples I did not include in my previous book are Cypress Creek Church in Wimberley, Texas and Liverpool Christian Life Centre in Liverpool, Australia.

THE MODEL APPROACH

Some churches have chosen to follow the entire ICM model. This approach is summed up by pastor Larry Stockstill, who, when talking about the G-12 model, said:

If you try to Americanize everything, it will not work. There is no reason whatsoever to alter what you see. We've been around that mountain for a long time. There is no reason to alter what you see in the Word and in the pattern. As you implement, you will immediately see the results of it. If you don't, you're not going to see any results.¹

Bethany has felt the Lord's leading to align themselves with ICM and follow its exact configuration, training track, emphasis on twelve as God's chosen number, and care structure.² God is blessing Bethany in an amazing way and helping them to reap the harvest like never before.³

Harvest Assembly in Virginia Beach, Virginia is another church that has followed the G-12 model in its entirety. One of the staff members said, "We understand that we must accept the whole package, that we cannot pick and choose."⁴ Mike Osborn, the youth

pastor, has made over thirteen trips to ICM, vacationed personally with Pastor Castellanos, and received step-by-step counsel on how to proceed. Harvest Assembly uses the exact same Encounter Retreats, School of Leadership, and follow-up system as ICM.

The Christian Center of Guayaquil, Ecuador (CCG) faithfully followed the classic 5x5 model developed by Pastor Cho and had grown to become the largest church in Ecuador. Even so, when Pastor Jerry Smith witnessed the explosive growth at ICM, he decided to adopt the G-12 model. CCG has sent over 50 pastors and leaders to ICM in order to understand the G-12 model and then implement it back home.

CCG asks all its cell leaders to commit themselves to three meetings per week. Each cell leader meets with his or her G-12 leader (first meeting), meets with his own G-12 members (second meeting), and leads an open cell group (third meeting), just as they do at ICM. CCG has also patterned its leadership training on ICM's. It holds similar Encounter retreats and its School of Leaders is identical, lasting nine months and having three trimesters.⁵ CCG changed radically in order to to embrace ICM's G-12 model.

The Metro Church International, located in Sunderland, England, is led by Ken and Lois Gott. This is also an ICM-model G-12 church. In 1998, Pastors Ken and Lois met Pastor Castellanos at the Assembly of God national conference in Prestatyn, Wales and he challenged them to dismiss the crowds in order to build the church through disciple-making. This they did, and from that time onward began the transition into G-12. Pastor Ken is now a member of Pastor Castellanos' International Group of Twelve and travels to Colombia twice each year to meet with Pastor Castellanos and the other members of his G-12.⁶

In Chile, the IPETRI, an independent Pentecostal church, represents ICM. Senior Pastor José Rivas identifies himself as a member of the International Group of Twelve of Pastor Castellanos.