

TURNING MEMBERS INTO
LEADERS

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How to raise up
your group members
to lead new groups

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FOREWORD

Many small group books on the market focus on how to have the perfect group experience. Few, however, explain why small groups are the perfect breeding ground for future leaders. This is one of those rare books.

When Christ saw the burgeoning needs around him, He said to His disciples, “ ... Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field” (Mt. 9:36-38). Churches do not reap the harvest because they have small groups. They reap the harvest because they have harvest workers. Unless small group members are converted into small group leaders, little long-term fruit remains.

Dave Earley understands this principle. The church he started in 1985 has grown to about 2000 people with over 125 small groups.

Dr. Earley’s first book, *Eight Habits of Effective Small Group Leaders* revealed the habits of great small group leadership. This book, *Turning Members into Leaders*, gives practical advice on how to convert small group members into effective leaders.

In this book you’ll learn how to dream for a multitude of leaders, model effective leadership, explain the vision with clarity, and how to release a new generation of leaders. The book will help you and your church fulfill the Great Commission by identifying, developing, and releasing your current members into small group leaders who reap the harvest.

Joel Comiskey

INTRODUCTION: THE DETERMINING FACTOR

I was a very young man when I planted a church. I think I'm still young, but no one else does. We planted with a team of young couples who all had full-time jobs in the community. After about a year of hard work and seeing our church grow from 12 to 150, I reached the end of my limits.

Then an idea began to dawn on me. The key to this church's future wasn't the ministry I could do or even we as a church planting team could do. The key to our church's future would be the ministry we could raise up *others* to do. I discovered that leadership development is the determining factor for maximum impact.

Anyone who has desired to make a deep, broad, lasting impact has come to the same conclusion. After eighteen years as the senior pastor of the church we planted in 1985, I keep coming back to the same conclusion. Leadership development is the determining factor. Of course I'm not alone in expressing this crying need for leadership. Listen to what George Barna has said,

I have spent the last 15 years researching all facets of American life ... Some have said I am obsessive about having information before making a judgment ... Now after fifteen years of diligent digging into the world around me, I reached several conclusions regarding the future of the Christian Church in America. The central conclusion is that the American church is dying due to a lack of strong leadership ... Nothing is more important than leadership.¹

Nothing is more important than leadership. First we must become effective leaders. Then we must develop effective leaders.

Dale Galloway said it this way,

From 1972 to 1995 I had the joy of pioneering what many have called one of the most effective small group systems in North America. We experienced big things in small groups. Thousands were brought to Christ, then effectively discipled and cared for in small groups. In retrospect the one thing we did that was the most outstanding was develop hundreds of leaders. If you build leaders, they will build cell groups and through them the church.²

Notice he said, “*The thing we did that was most outstanding was developing hundreds of leaders.*” Leadership development is the determining factor.

Russ Robinson and Bill Donahue, who oversaw a network of 2,700 groups, made this point, “An emerging small group ministry cannot succeed without a commitment to effective leadership development ... A small group ministry rises and falls on the quality of its leaders.”³ Everything—including and especially a small group ministry—rises and falls on the quality of its leaders.

Joel Comiskey, the outstanding author and researcher of high impact cell ministry around the world, gets to the point:

I have researched small groups around the world. Here’s what I have discovered: Small groups are not the answer ... Small groups come and go, they rise and fall over time. Unless small group members are converted into small group leaders, little long-term fruit remains. Churches do not reap the harvest because they have small groups. They reap the harvest because they have harvest workers. Churches that have no plan to develop leaders have by default, planned to lose the harvest.⁴

If leadership is the determining factor, why do few small group leaders effectively multiply themselves by developing effective leaders? I believe it’s because, even though most small group leaders have a passion to be used of God to raise up effective leaders, they’re not sure how to do it. They need a practical strategy to make it happen.

I’ve spent the last twenty years on a quest to learn *how* to mentor and multiply effective leaders. I started with the disciple-making ministry of Jesus. I then studied the multiplying ministry of Barnabas into the life of Paul. I also read everything I could find on disciple making, leadership development and cell ministry. I attended many seminars and listened to

more tapes than I can count. I talked with effective pastors and Christian leaders. And I experimented.

I've come to see the eight steps Jesus used for developing effective leaders reinforced again and again in ministry experience. I've taught these eight steps for developing leaders to hundreds of pastors, Christian leaders, missionaries, and small group leaders.

I believe these eight steps will help anyone interested in mentoring and multiplying effective leaders. Some of the reasons are:

1. The eight steps are biblical. They were practiced by both Jesus in his disciple-making ministry and Barnabas in helping develop Paul for ministry.

2. The eight steps are universal. They apply to all cultures and all types of groups. They're simple universal steps that will work for any type of group and any type of leader. I'm currently training 14-year-old students to practice them.

They're usable with any group of people, whatever their age, race, gender, or socioeconomic level. 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 United States.

Although some see a distinction between "small groups" and "cell groups," in this book the terms are treated interchangeably. This is because the eight steps are universal and apply to both. One beautiful fact is that they're essentially the same habits that apply to developing any type of leader. They can be used to mentor and multiply coaches of small group leaders, zone directors, small group pastors, and church planters. Once a leader incorporates them, he or she has the foundation for moving up the levels of small group leadership and kingdom impact.

3. The eight steps are effective. Following the eight steps for multiplying small leaders can make all the difference between mediocrity and greatness, between faithfulness and fruitfulness, between stagnation and multiplication. Following them can produce future leaders and will multiply your ministry.

4. The eight steps are simple. They're easy to understand and remember. I've seen leaders' eyes light up, and the light bulb of recognition turn on as the eight steps are explained.

5. The eight steps are practical. You can use them. Any leader can put them into practice, if they'll invest the time. When the steps are explained, leaders nod and say things like, "This is just what I've been looking for. Now I have a clear course to follow. I can do this." They're realistic expectations. Most leaders can fit them into their busy schedules.

It doesn't take a spiritual giant or someone with unlimited time to do them. These eight steps are attainable goals for small group leaders.

6. The eight steps are vital. Leadership development is the determining factor. The ability to successfully develop leaders will determine such vital issues as the size, strength, and health of your ministry. It will predict the excellence of your ministry and its long-term impact/future. Developing leaders is the only way to develop the speed and flexibility required for your ministry to handle change. Multiplying leaders is the only way we can ever hope to fulfill the Great Commission and reap the harvest

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

The eight steps for multiplying leaders provide a track to take a small group leader, and those under him or her, to a new level. Whether an apprentice to a small group leader, a novice small group leader, a seasoned leader, a coach of small group leaders, a director of a district of groups, the pastor of a large small-groups ministry, or the pastor of a small church, the eight steps will work. These steps serve as a path that leads to fruitfulness and multiplication. The eight steps will help leaders, and those under them, experience greater fulfillment in ministry.

Eight Steps for Developing New Small Group Leaders

DREAM: Dream of Multiplying Leaders.

DEMONSTRATE: Demonstrate Multiplying Leadership.

DISCOVER: Discover Potential Leaders.

DEEPEN: Deepen Your Relationship with Them.

DESCRIBE: Describe the Vision to Them.

DETERMINE: Determine the Commitments to be Made.

DEVELOP: Develop Them for Leadership.

DEPLOY: Deploy Them into Leadership.

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