

New Ideas for College Outreach

The issues

A need for leadership

At the heart of our vision for ministry has been the belief that developing mature servants of Christ is the key to getting his work done. Christ himself said that the harvest is plentiful, it is the workers who are few (Luke 10:2).

Today, our primary goal has to be growth and maturity of future workers and leaders. Unfortunately, many of our structures are not aimed at that goal.

A need for more discipleship

Discipleship is simply bringing people closer to Christ. We are all supposed to be disciples (close followers) of Christ. In the initial stages of a Christian's life, this can be accomplished by very light and general studies, like those at our ministry team meetings and the meeting on campus. However, as someone matures, they need more "solid food" (Heb. 5:14). We try to provide this through the cell groups, with varying degrees of success.

Cell groups have a couple shortcomings. For one, a wide spectrum of spiritual maturity can be found in the same cell group. Sometimes the deeper needs of older Christians are overlooked in favor of finding a "lowest common denominator." The other problem with cell groups can be their permanence. I have often thought it is a bad idea to have a good leadership developer in a single cell group, when his/her skills could be spread around. Our discipleship is to Christ, not to a particular person. The entire body of Christ should be making an impact on the individuals. So, it is to our advantage to subject people to as many mature influences as possible. This is why I believe that even if we go back to cell groups, we probably should not conceive of them as permanent. We should ask the mature and gifted teachers among us to "share their wealth."

All this is not to say that some day we won't go back to cell groups. I think we need to have a flexible and open structure, able to change depending on the need.

A need to focus our ministry efforts

Right now, we have two meetings that are very similar. We have an outreach-oriented meeting on campus, and another large meeting on Tuesday nights where both Christians and non-Christians come. Both meetings are fairly diffuse and social. Both are aimed at the "lowest common denominator" of understanding. In

fact, all our meetings, including cell group, are open to anyone who wants to come in.

We are currently expending effort to create two very similar meetings, when the need lies elsewhere. It is my feeling, shared by many, that right now we are seriously lacking in student leadership. We are seriously lacking in the attitude which gives rise to leadership—hard work, dedication, serious study, etc. There is no doubt that there is less study, less of a focus on hard work, and overall lower spiritual standards today than at previous times. This is not good. Unfortunately, the structures we have in place do nothing curb these shortcomings.

The proposal

Temporarily cancel the ministry teams—replace them with study groups

The proposal is to temporarily (for about 6 months), cancel the ministry team meetings and have study group meetings on that night. The study group meetings would not be open to all. A person must be willing to work, including study, assignments, memorization, even tests. So, the door will be open to all, *if they are willing to commit to work.*

We would commission several of our best teachers and leaders to lead these groups, with co-leaders there to learn and help. Depending on the interest, we might need anywhere from 6-10 groups. The size of the groups would be about 6-10 people (including leaders). To facilitate more personal interaction and not just intellectual study, the groups need to be smaller. Some could be co-ed. I believe that mixing the sexes is good for several reasons: 1) It can introduce a challenging aspect. I think men are challenged to do better in the presence of women, and vice-versa. 2) As we discuss issues of sanctification and scripture, the different sexes have different points of view, which is balancing. 3) I think the men in our groups would do well under the influence of some of our best women leaders. Likewise, I think some of the women in our church could really benefit from our male leaders. 4) Having co-ed groups would increase the sense of unity. 5) It would be more natural to invite new people into a co-ed group. There is also a need for some groups to be single-sex. Some of our workers are at a stage right now where they need the safety and focus that comes from a single-sex group.

The groups would meet on Tuesday nights, and afterwards they could meet to socialize. Their duration would be about 6 months or less (some may be as short as 3 months). New people would be invited into follow-up study groups, where the content would be much lighter. Follow up study groups would also have a shorter overall time-commitment.

Several ideas have been tossed around about what would be good to study. Generally the plan of study would be left up to the individual leader. However, we would meet weekly, in place of current leaders meetings, to talk about our groups and share ideas. At that time, we would also discuss any new-person/follow up items.

Begin a Friday night workers/prayer meeting

A second aspect of this plan would be to replace our current cell groups with a Friday night prayer/workers meeting. It would be an early evening meeting, hopefully finished by 8:30 PM. This meeting would be open to all. We would announce it at the Thursday night meeting. I think for the purpose of meeting people and hanging out on a weekend night, it would have quite an appeal.

At the prayer meeting we would begin with one of our leaders or workers sharing a burden or scripture on something related to the work. There would also be some time to share news, information, updates on the progress of the work, etc. Probably we would have a prayer-list each week.

The first part should take no more than 30-40 minutes. Then we should break down into smaller groups for prayer. The entire meeting should be over by 8:30, so that people can go out together, go meet someone, etc.

Questions?

Here are some of the questions I have been asked already in sharing this plan:

Succinctly, why are we doing this?

To create a deeper, more widespread consensus in our group about hard work, discipleship, and hard study. I also believe that by focusing our efforts on one outreach meeting, we will do a better job.

Why cancel the ministry team meetings? Why not cancel cell groups and replace them with study groups?

One of the main issues here is that we are re-duplicating our efforts at two, very similar meetings. If we focus on one outreach meeting, we will do a better job at that.

Also, we want everyone to get involved in these study groups. Even though we have standards and requirements, our goal should be to sell every single person on this plan. Cell groups are not as well-attended or enthusiastically supported as our ministry teams. We can't keep two large meetings that just about everyone goes to,

and then wave a flag over on Friday nights saying, "Come over here too for some really hard work!" We need to cut back on people's schedules at the place we are duplicating the same type of meeting (M.T. meetings and the Campus Bible Study).

Won't people be upset at the change?

I, personally, find change to be exciting. I don't think I'm alone on this at all. I believe people get bored with the same old thing. They get bored of cell groups. They get bored of similar meetings saying the same thing. I think most people like change, *if they're given clear direction.*

Our goal has to be to win people. We must convince them there is a problem. We must also convince them that we can solve the problem, with some hard work and determination. People will respond to our call if they are challenged.

Why "temporarily"?

Again, I believe that we should grow accustomed to changing our structures and methods to meet needs. I believe that during the spring and summer we could go back to a larger meeting format, if we feel it's appropriate. Since summer is a time of transition, vacation and interruptions, a larger more diffuse setting may be just as good.

Next fall or winter, I could see re-introducing study groups again. I think that changing things up gives our better teachers and leaders a chance to have an impact on a greater variety of people.

Study Groups

Overall goals:

1. Cultivate deeper spirituality (regular prayer, personal evaluation of commitment, godly decision making, etc.)
2. Focus and equip people for evangelism (weekly discussion of progress, personalized counseling, studies on how, etc.)
3. Support the Campus Bible Study (requiring attendance, prayer, updating on progress, teaching on how to support)
4. Cultivate a hard-working attitude (assignments in scripture, attention to schedule, assigned books, scripture memorization, specific awareness of role in church)

Selling study groups

The message we need to consistently communicate is that we have not been satisfied with the level of hard work in the Scriptures, the level of spirituality, in prayer, etc., and the more subjective sense that we are not as committed to the work of the Lord as we ought to be. We have to take some responsibility for this. We have to acknowledge that in our leadership we have let a focus on prayer slip. We have allowed all our meetings to gradually slide to a "lowest common denominator" approach.

There should be at least one week at the Campus Bible Study where I talk about these new plans in depth. We should have one week in our ministry team meetings where we do the same thing.

After we've put things in motion, we need to announce the opportunity to get involved in groups almost every week at the Campus Bible Study. We need a person who can handle sign-ups every week—the same person who handles the "free book" offer.

Types of groups

At least one introductory group: This one should be mixed sex. It should be for new Christians (or the newly-walking Christian). This group should also be open to receiving new people, together with the people who brought them.

Student worker group: A group for studying the various aspects of student work, especially with high school students.

Worker study groups: A general study group for most people who have been walking for some time and need a more in-depth approach.

Necessary elements**For discussion**

Weekly discussion on evangelism.

Regular (at least once a month) discussion of the Campus Bible Study.

Assignments

For the workers groups, a detailed look at time management.

Regular prayer time for each person (expectations would be different for each type of group)

Duration

The teaching portion of a meeting should never be longer than two hours.

All groups should conclude by the end of May.

Discipline

We must be willing to remove people from a group for any one of the following reasons:

Serious moral problems

Failing to complete assignments on a regular basis

Failing to attend either the Campus Bible Study or the study group on a regular basis.

Leadership**The role of the teaching leader**

With input from the other teaching leaders and the backup leader(s), create a curriculum for the duration of the group. Clear this curriculum with Buck.

Attend weekly meeting of the teaching leaders.

The role of the co-leader(s)

Do all the work required in the group.

Assist the teaching leader in teaching, grading, administration.

Have at least one person in the group to get together with, work on the assignments together, and grow a more personal relationship.

Friday Night Prayer

Purpose

I think everyone agrees we have been disgustingly sorry at prayer. It doesn't help that we take our prayer meetings and put them out of the way in some corner of our schedule where they won't inconvenience anyone. It also doesn't help that most of our leaders don't attend the prayer meetings we have.

The purpose of this meeting is twofold. First, we have to emphasize prayer. We have to believe and promote prayer as the basis of our ministry. We need to feature a meeting for that purpose. The second purpose this meeting could serve is to regularly update people on the work. We'll share facts, figures and needs; and keep evangelism and other issues in front of the people each week. Along these lines, we should be able to have a brief sharing by one of the workers or leaders on a work or prayer related issue.

Format

The meeting will begin at 7:30. We need to start early with the goal of ending by 8:30, 9:00 at the latest. We want people to be able to go out with each other, go out with non-Christians or take the night to study.

The first part of the meeting should be an update about evangelism, concerns and good news we have about the Campus Bible Study, and any plans we've been considering. This should be no longer than 5-10 minutes.

Next, a worker, leader or new teacher could share a burden. It could be a brief teaching out of the Bible, a testimony of some recent conviction, etc.

The second half of the meeting should be broken down into groups (?). Every group should have a prayer list.

Requirements

Our leaders must attend this meeting! We should make it a goal as leaders to be there at least every other week. We have to send the message to people that our work won't go forward without prayer.

We should announce this meeting at the Campus Bible Study each week. It should be open to all who want to help with the work.