

October 2011 Leaders Seminar Notes

Be encouraged

We are continuing to see solid growth in the church and in the Small Groups Ministry.

Many new people are taking advantage of this ministry to take their journey with Christ to the next level and many are experiencing spiritual breakthrough through the programs and through the care and support they receive.

Culture

This morning I want to touch on the idea of culture.

HOW ARE YOU INFLUENCING CHURCH CULTURE?

Within any church numerous cultures exist; from how often people attend Sunday Services, how freely people volunteer their time and whether they become and stay part of a Small Group. These cultures vary tremendously from church to church.

For all of us as a leadership team we need to try to direct the cultures that exist within the church. We need to work against negative or complacent cultures and set the pace to create good culture/s.

We shift the various cultures of the church by our example and this is driven by our view on various aspects of the church.

If we feel that coming to church once a month is ok then we begin to create a culture within the church for poor attendance and those that follow our example become more distant and separated from the church community.

If we are consistently positive and supportive of events promoted by the church we develop a culture of involvement.

The church wide culture is heavily influenced by the culture we develop as leaders. The cultures within the church determine how effectively we touch lives in the community.

To give you another example: For God to move in our services we need powerful prayer, to build powerful prayer we need to build a culture where every leader is in the prayer room on a Sunday morning.

As every leader begins to come, their teams will come.

We need to help shift the culture and recognise that our leadership, our example makes a difference.

Our Church has a great culture when it comes to Small Groups. There is a subtle expectation that people should be in a Small Group.

Long before my time this culture was already being developed and we continue to try to strengthen and implement that culture within the church. We want to continue to make it an expectation that people plug into a growing Small Group.

Good culture is driven by the collective mindset of each of us as leaders and requires us to maintain a positive attitude and an enthusiasm in the way we view and speak about the Small Groups Ministry and the Church to others.

So far we are doing a fantastic job of this and this is reflected in the growth of the ministry and the established culture but it is very easy for all us to be influenced by the status quo around us and we need to have a level of motivation, enthusiasm and vision that is at least one step ahead of our teams at all times.

As we enter our final term for the year let me encourage you to keep the same level of enthusiasm and continue to encourage your teams to stick with it. We are each responsible for encouraging and keeping our groups active.

HOW ARE YOU INFLUENCING CHURCH CULTURE?

The Next Step 2012

Several groups in the last term have grown to 12 and I have met, and will meet further, with those leaders in preparation for new groups to be birthed next year.

This is a **progressive** process as the right people are placed in new leadership roles and the right people are placed in each group over a matter of months.

At least three new groups will be birthed for Term 1 next year with the potential for a further two groups dependent on finding the right leadership.

This is exciting as new groups bring new relationships and opportunities for people to grow and to step up into leadership roles.

As we take the next step we need to continue to evaluate each group to ensure it is functioning well as a unit. N.B. Small Groups does not equal Bible Study.

Small Groups is:

1. Pastoral Care
 - a. In the large church the Small Group manages most pastoral care
2. Spiritual Growth
3. Prayer, Praise, Worship, Communion
4. Evangelism “More to Life”
 - a. Our Small Group should invite people who will at some point enter our worshipping community
5. Promotion of the church
 - a. Our Small groups should be advocates for the church.
 - b. Our Small Groups should be constantly promoting our church events, new initiatives like Christian Education, building projects, vision.

Each Small Group needs to have a strategic distribution of the right people to cover a variety of functions much like the wider church will have different parts of the body for each area of ministry.

This needs to be more strategic in the Small Group, simply because it's a *small - group*. A Small Group doesn't function well with three heads and three feet and nothing else.

1 Corinthians 12

⁷ A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other. ⁸ To one person the Spirit gives the ability to give wise advice^[b]; to another the same Spirit gives a message of special knowledge.^[c] ⁹ The same Spirit gives great faith to another, and to someone else the one Spirit gives the gift of healing. ¹⁰ He gives one person the power to perform miracles, and another the ability to prophesy. He gives someone else the ability to discern whether a message is from the Spirit of God or from another spirit. Still another person is given the ability to speak in unknown languages,^[d] while another is given the ability to interpret what is being said. ¹¹ It is the one and only Spirit who distributes all these gifts. He alone decides which gift each person should have.

As leaders we need to be constantly examining the dynamics, function and effectiveness of our group and determining whether we have a good mix of people with different gifts.

Each group needs a leader obviously who can facilitate prayer and discussion, at least one good care person who can phone people and coordinate practical support and just as importantly at least one person who has a gift for evangelism otherwise the group won't grow.

This is by no means an exhaustive list!

If we neglect to examine the dynamics of the group it may not satisfy all of the functions it is required to perform.

As we take "the next step" we need to pay attention to the dynamics of each group to ensure the people in each group make them function at their best.

I would like you to consider some things prayerfully over the coming weeks:

1. Work out the spiritual gifts of your people and determine how this functions in their role in your group: Care, encouragement, evangelist, hospitality, handy man, comedian 😊. Have some fun with it and have a think about what makes up your group.
 - a. Encourage SHAPE CLASS
2. What key person would make your group more effective in achieving its goals?

3. Are there people in your group that would function better elsewhere?

Also, we need to ensure we do not have too many people who are heavily dependent on us as the leader. If half of your group is made up of people who require a lot of support then it will wear you out. We need to ensure there is a strategic distribution of people across the ministry to allow all groups to function optimally.

In order for each group to function well as a unit we need to work collectively as a ministry viewing our groups as belonging to God and the ministry not to ourselves.

We each take ownership of our groups and support and grow them **but** at times we will need to move people from group to group to improve how each of the groups function.

Week by week I am trying to learn as much as I can from you about the dynamics of your group. I want to make decisions with you so that each group can function at its best. You know most about your people, your group dynamics and what it needs, I want to work with you to achieve those needs. There will be changes for 2012!

This is a large ministry and meeting with everyone takes time but over the next few months I would like to continue to meet with each of you face to face to find out how you feel your group is going and how we can we work together to keep it functioning well; pastoral care, spiritual growth and group growth.

While we are touching on group division I want you to think about these things:

- If you see group division as positive and an achievement your group will too
- If you buy into it as a way forward for church growth they will
- Just because you separate from people in a group setting doesn't mean you lose anything from the relationships you have built with them
- We must allow new leaders to rise up as we know that people who are **under challenged** leave the church – Thank you **Bill Hybels**
- There is immense satisfaction in recruiting and building up a new leader and birthing a new group that can go out and touch lives.

We need to be good stewards. If we continue to work on putting the right leader with the right TEAM of people we can accomplish great things as good stewards of what God has given us.

Bait of Satan

The Bait of Satan program has been very successful with a lot of really positive feedback about the program.

As the program continues it has become at times more difficult to connect the teaching directly to taking offense. I think it is good for the sake of the group who are trying to follow the overall theme to intentionally connect the teaching with offense.

In saying that I think it is a good thing that the material digresses somewhat from the central concept of offense because it allows people who have processed the concept already to explore some other concepts.

In preparation for Term 4 can I ask you to consider two things?

1. Promote the remainder of the Bait of Satan to your group to keep them involved to the end of the program. The enthusiasm of your group will reflect your enthusiasm.
2. Continue to recruit people for your group even though we are part way through a program
 - a. Each of the sessions are somewhat standalone
 - b. Connect Groups are not just about the program

Thank you for your commitment to the Small Groups Ministry, it is a pleasure working with you.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lush" followed by a stylized monogram or initials.

Pastor Les