

ARC Small Groups Newsletter, April 4, 2007

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Serving Together,
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Coaches Training - Update

For three weeks in March 20-25 people gathered on Sunday morning to discuss and learn more about small group coaching. We had wonderful discussion about what small group life is all about and how we can involve more people at the church in these wonderful communities. As we move forward, some of the folks that attended this three week training are going to commit to becoming a part of your lives as small group coaches.

These small group coaches are not “The small group police.” They are not around to spy on your group. They are there to encourage you, pray for you and your group, be a valuable resource, and to dream with you about how your small group life can become even better than it is today. God has big dreams for small groups, and if we work together as a team of leaders, we can realize those dreams at Autumn Ridge.

Look to the future to consider how you can become involved with a small group coach in your own group leadership.

Upcoming Small Group Events

Just Walk Across the Room

In June of 2007 we are launching a small group campaign called *Just Walk Across the Room*. This resource that has been developed by Willow Creek in Chicago is based on the book by the same name authored by Willow Creek's Senior Pastor, Bill Hybels. Hybels is taking a step forward from his personal evangelism training in *Becoming a Contagious Christian*. Hybels has learned from over 30 years in ministry to listen to the Holy Spirit when engaging people in spiritual conversations. In his latest book, *Just Walk Across the Room*, he shares his insights and challenges all followers of Christ to step out of their comfort zone for Jesus' sake.

At Autumn Ridge we will be learning how to take bold steps toward becoming people who listen to the Holy Spirit as we rub shoulders with our neighbors and engage them in spiritual conversations. *Just Walk Across the Room* will be a church wide campaign as it will be preached from the pulpit and lived out in small groups for four weeks in June of 2007.

Please consider how you might be involved in this important campaign for our church. You might lead your current group, be a leader of a new group, or encourage someone from your group to take a step of faith to lead a new group. During past small group emphasis campaigns we have had over 1000 people involved in small group life – let's see how we can move forward with God's help this June!

I'm looking for small group leaders right now for this campaign. If you would like to lead your current group, start a new group for 4 weeks, or help a group

member in your group take the next step toward leadership, please [email me](#).

Willow Creek Small Groups Conference – September 27-29

“Three days at Willow Creek is worth a year of teaching on small groups.”

Or so says one small group junkie at Autumn Ridge. If you want to be encouraged and resourced in your small group leadership, then this conference is the way to go. This year we are hoping to fill a busload of people to catch the small group vision and learn how they are best gifted to serve God within the small group ministry. You might find yourself saying, “But I’m already on board with small groups, you don’t need me to go to an event like this.” On the contrary, if you are already on board with small groups, you are exactly the right person to go to an event like this. Willow Creek promises to be three exciting days of teaching, fellowship, teambuilding, and vision casting. Autumn Ridge’s small group ministry will be better off if you attend this conference.

Resources for Leading Your Small Group

Making your small groups models of evangelism **by Steve Gladen**

Perhaps you’ve heard of the Purpose Driven Church and the 5 purposes associated with the church: Discipleship, Evangelism, Fellowship, Ministry, and Worship. What would you guess is the most difficult of the five purposes for most of those in your church?

If you guessed evangelism, you’d be right. Although people acknowledge its importance, whenever I ask people to evaluate their strengths and weaknesses, they consistently state that they have the most difficult time trying to live out the purpose of evangelism. Even pastors themselves feel this way. In fact, for most Christians, the longer we are believers, the less in touch we

are with non-believers. Since evangelism doesn't come naturally for most of us, we often ignore it completely.

We must conquer this fear. Evangelism needs to be a priority for us and for our small groups because, of the five purposes, it's the only one we can do on earth that we can't do in heaven. If we don't obey God's command on this side of heaven, it will be too late. We need to encourage small groups in our churches to offer practical evangelism opportunities. By working together to share their faith, the entire process of evangelism will be less scary for your church members. Here are some ideas to get started.

- Ask group members to share how they heard and came to accept the Good News that Jesus died on the cross for their sins. You may have some seekers in your group but that's all the better. It's great for them to hear people's personal stories. After all, these stories will undoubtedly involve the retelling of the Gospel, and will remind the group of the power of the invitation.
- Read and discuss biblical passages that show Christ caring for or reaching out to the lost. Luke 5:27-32 is a good example. Then have group members share the first name of a person they hope would come to know Christ. In the 90 seconds it takes to go around the group and state that name, you'll have a top 10 list of people the group can pray for. Then the group needs to be sure to pray for that person on the list every time they meet.
- Give group members time to practice sharing their testimony with each other. Commit an entire evening to this. Or set aside time each week for one person to share a five-minute testimony so they can get practice sharing how Christ has changed his or her life.
- Invite seekers to a party. This can be a dinner party, Super Bowl party, backyard barbecue, or a picnic. Make sure everyone understands this isn't a commitment or even an invitation to join the group. It's a party. However, it's an opportunity for small group members to spend time with people who are not yet believers in Christ. Make sure you invite some (or all) of the people on that top 10 prayer list.
- Along those lines, encourage group members to invite someone home for dinner. This might be an unbelieving couple from their neighborhood or someone from the kids' soccer team. Ask the group to pray for that evening.
- Invite non-believers to special Christmas or Easter events at your church. Non-believers are more receptive to an invitation at Christmas and Easter than any other time of the year.
- Adopt one of the world's 3,000 unreached people groups through Wycliffe Bible Translators. Your group's job will be to pray that the people group you adopted will hear and accept the Gospel of Jesus Christ. What group can't take this simple crawl step to just pray for

an unreached people group?

- Spend some time as a group learning about evangelism. Many small group studies are available. One of my favorites is called *Share Jesus Without Fear* (published by LifeWay Christian Resources).

Our enemy the Devil likes to make us think that evangelism is mission impossible – a big humongous task that no one can do. But the bottom line is this: If your small groups are helping the lost to become found by praying, by sharing their testimonies, by inviting non-believers to a meal, they are fulfilling the purpose of evangelism. It's really that simple. Availability is the key. If our church members become available, God will use them. If they're willing to love people, doors will open. If they can simply tell their own stories, lives can be changed. And there's nothing more exciting than watching someone come to know Jesus as Lord and Savior.

Video – Honesty in Small Groups (7:10)

This is a great resource from *Solutions on Video*:

To watch this video from Dr. John Townsend and Dr. Henry Cloud, click [here](#).