

Exercise 1: What is church all about?

Summary of our Aims:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

How do we know if we are actually being effective in these aims?

Corporate vs Community

Acts 2:46-47 They followed a daily discipline of worship in the Temple followed by meals at home, every meal a celebration, exuberant and joyful, as they praised God. People in general liked what they saw. Every day their number grew as God added those who were saved. (Message)

Acts 20:20 How I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. (ESV)

Curtis Schwartz: "If we were to identify any one principle as the 'most important,' then without a doubt it would be the multiplication of small groups. (8 Essential Qualities of a Healthy Church)

Exercise 2: What does an effective small group look like?

Summary:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

“Effective small groups are the untapped potential of the local church. Not only can they multiply to reach large numbers of people, but they can be spiritual hospitals for the hurting and hothouses for spiritual growth. They can be a breeding ground for leaders and a launching pad for spiritual warfare. They can give people a feeling of belonging. Effective groups can create evangelism teams. Yet this potential often goes unrealised without a dream.” *(8 Habits of Effective Small Group Leaders) Dave Earley*

The Balance of Vision & Values vs Programs, Structures & Skills

Practical Training on Programs, Structures & Skills will aim to address:

1. What we actually do with our group time

internal structure, effectiveness, clear aims, being intentional

2. How we help new people join or interact with our group

introduce, explain, don't assume, avoid exclusivity

3. How we help people grow

Practical ways to study the bible together, holding each other accountable, giving away leadership experience

4. How groups reproduce

Constantly equip people to realise their own potential, Looking for kingdom opportunities

Eg. W Suffolk: average length of groups - 18 months where not reproduced, 3 yrs where reproduced (+ 2nd group)

Vision

“A peek at the future that God has intended for each disciple.”

“A dream with wheels and a road map.”

“Providing a focus among the overwhelming amount of needs.”

“A God-sized idea.”

(George Barna, The Power of Vision)

“God gives us the vision, then he takes us down to the valley to alter us into the shape of the vision, and it is in the valley that so many of us faint and give way. Every vision will be made real if we will have patience.”

(Oswald Chambers, My Utmost for His Highest)

Every effective group must have a clear vision

- What is the vision for your group?
- Vision must come from God & be in line with the overall vision of winwin
- What is God saying to you? What's on your heart? What is God asking you to do?
- Vision + Vision = Division!!

Values

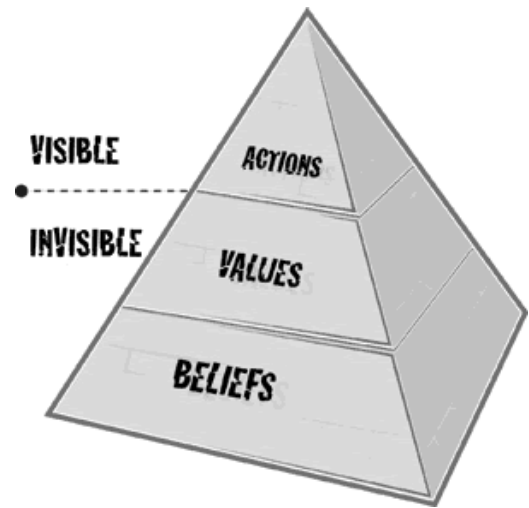
Internal priorities that express themselves consistently in concrete actions.

- “You do what you value & value what you do”.
- Not a case of “do you have values?” but more “what are your values?”
- Stated values sometimes differ from actual real values.

Can you think of an example where stated values do not match actual values?

Values inform Actions

- It is not worth trying to change systems & structures without revisiting and/or changing values.



Winvin Values

God at the centre

Everything we do is based on the love of the Father, the example & sacrifice of Jesus & the empowering of the Spirit.

Every member in community

Developing quality relationships of sacrificial love and honesty.

Every member in ministry

Using our lives and gifts to serve one another and those in need.

Every member growing

Continually becoming more like Jesus through discipleship & character transformation.

Every member making disciples

Allowing God's love & life to impact on our communities, reaching people & helping to multiply cells.

Which of these values do you personally find easier to 'own' & which are more challenging??

Appendix: The Eight Essential Qualities of a Healthy Church

The findings of the most thorough study to date on the causes for church growth led to an amazing conclusion for Christian A. Schwarz and a team from the “Institute for Church Development” in Germany. The three year study, translated into 18 languages, received responses from 4.2 million people, from more than 1000 churches in 32 countries located in five continents. It included data completed by 30 members from each participating church dealing with the question, “What are the essential qualities of a healthy growing church, regardless of culture and theological persuasion?”

Christian and his team discovered that just as crops grow all by themselves if the obstacles are taken out of the way, churches grow when obstacles to growth are removed. Jesus said, “The kingdom of God is like a man who casts seed on the ground, and goes to bed at night and gets up by day, and the seed sprouts up and grows—how, he himself does not know. The earth produces crops by itself; first the blade, then the head, and then the mature grain in the head” (Mark 4:26-28).

This research project revealed eight Biblical qualities for a healthy growing church:

- 1. Empowering Leadership**—Leaders of healthy growing churches concentrate on empowering other Christians for ministry. They do not use lay workers as “helpers” in attaining their own goals and fulfilling their own visions. Rather, they invert the pyramid of authority so that the leader assists Christians to attain the spiritual potential God has for them. These pastors equip, support, motivate, and mentor individuals, enabling them to become all that God wants them to be.
- 2. Gift-oriented ministry**—The role of church leadership is to help its members to identify their gifts and to integrate them into appropriate ministries. When Christians serve in their areas of giftedness, they generally function less in their own strength and more in the power of the Holy Spirit. Thus ordinary people can accomplish the extraordinary.
- 3. Passionate spirituality**—Are Christians in our church “on fire?” Do they live committed lives and practice their faith with joy and enthusiasm? A few weeks ago I waited in line for more than eight hours for the doors to open at the Brownsville Assembly of God Church facility in Pensacola, Florida. When the doors opened at 6 PM, there were too many people in line in front of me to get a seat in the main sanctuary. I ended up in the chapel next door perched in front of a video screen. People were so hungry for God. At the end of evangelist Steve Hill’s sermon, hundreds of people literally ran to the altar to get right with God. Many of them were Generation Xers. The Lord is restoring passionate spirituality to His church in our day.
- 4. Functional structures**—There are those who believe “structure” and “life” are opposites. Both are needed. Biological research reveals that dead matter and living organisms are not distinguished by their substance, but by the structural relationship of the parts to each other. Whenever God breathes His Spirit into formless clay, both life and form spring forth. When God pours out His spirit within the church today. He gives it structure and form. New cells are flexible structures for the new life He is bringing to our churches.
- 5. Inspiring worship service**—Is the worship service in your church inspiring? Cell churches who minimize anointed worship services are shooting themselves in the foot. Paul taught publicly, and from house to house (Acts 20:20). We need both!
- 6. Holistic small groups**—Christian Schwarz stated, “If we were to identify any one principle as the ‘most important,’ then without a doubt it would be the multiplication of small groups. They must be holistic small groups which go beyond just discussing Bible passages to applying its message to daily life. In these groups, members are able to bring up those issues and questions that are immediate personal concerns.”
- 7. Need oriented evangelism**—We are all called to use our gifts to fulfill the Great Commission. Each Christian must use his or her gifts to serve non-Christians with whom one has a personal relationship, to see to it that they hear the gospel, and to encourage contact with the local church.
- 8. Loving relationships**—Growing churches possess a measurably higher “love quotient” than stagnant, declining ones. Healthy growing churches practice hospitality as believers invite others into their homes as a normal part of their Christian lives. People do not want to hear us talk about love, they want to experience how Christian love really works.

Each of these qualities is essential for a healthy growing church. Take a quick evaluation of your church and your cell group. Are there obstacles to be removed to experience healthy growth? The engine, carburetor, and transmission of your car may all be working fine, but if you have a flat tire, you must remove this obstacle for your car to function properly.

Whether we are focusing on reaching boomers, busters, or Generation X, the cell-based church is an ideal model to experience these eight qualities. However, it takes more than being a cell church. All of these essential qualities must work together.

By Larry Kreider

Excerpts taken from *Natural Church Development: A Guide to Eight Essential Qualities of Healthy Churches*, by Christian A. Schwarz (Carol Stream, IL: ChurchSmart Resources, 1996)

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