

# **Developing Leaders in a Community Group**

An outline of *Leadership Explosion* by Joel Comiskey

## **Introduction: We Need More Leaders**

In the introduction Comiskey argues that developing leaders is the most important part of small group ministry.

**Principle 1:** Building leaders is the goal of small group ministry.

- 1) “Small groups are not the answer. In fact, there is danger in thinking that small groups are 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. (16)”
- 2) What has been the goal of your small group ministry? How does Comiskey challenge that goal?

**Principle 2:** The best place to find small group leaders is by looking inside the small group not outside the small group.

- 1) “The growth of the cell movement is based on raising up leaders from within. The highest priority of the cell leader is to identify prospective interns and begin the mentoring process. (16)”
- 2) Do look at all the members of your small group as potential leaders? If not, why not?

**Principle 3:** A leader is someone who can exercise his or her influence over a group.

- 1) “When I use the word *leader* in this book, I’m referring to a person who exercise his or her God-given capacity to *influence* a specific group of God’s people toward God’s purposes for the group. (17)”
- 2) Are you helping the people in your small group to be influential? If not, why not?

## **Chapter 1: Barriers To Developing Leaders**

In this chapter Comiskey talks about 6 common barriers to building small group leaders.

**Barrier 1:** Time Drain

- 1) “More and more church members insist that they have not time for leadership involvement. (22)”

**Barrier 2:** Church Attendance Focus

- 1) “When a church focuses primarily on Sunday morning attendance, the people feel like they’ve fulfilled their purpose simply by showing up on Sunday. (23)”

**Barrier 3:** Academic Training Mindset

- 1) “Many church leaders know how to develop teachers but not leaders. (24)”

**Barrier 4:** Faulty Leadership Training

- 1) "The phrase 'general education' characterizes the training in most churches. The goal is often to prepare a person to live the Christian life, rather than to lead a group of people. (25)"

**Barrier 5: Inability To Mentor Others**

- 1) Mentoring others, a relational experience through which one person empowers another by sharing God-given resources, is not common in our society. (25)"

**Barrier 6: A Lack Of A Theology Of The Priesthood Of All Believers**

- 1) While the church has done a good job of training people to go directly, to God, by and Large, it has failed to train people to minister to others. (26)"

These barriers must not stop churches from develop leaders though small groups (Community Groups).

## **Chapter 2: Developing Everyone**

In this chapter Comiskey argues that everyone should be considered for small group leadership.

### **Who should be considered for leading small groups?**

- 1) Young Christians
  - a. "The potential for evangelism is much higher with new Christians than with mature ones. This is primarily due to the fact that new Christians still have contact with non-Christians. New Christians are enthusiastic. When they are not allowed to evangelize or serve right away, they become stagnant and lose their enthusiasm. (32)"
- 2) Women
  - a. "The proliferation of cell groups creates a need for more leaders and it becomes especially critical that a church not eliminate 50 percent of its potential small-group leaders on the basis of gender. (33)"
- 3) The less likely
  - a. "I discovered that the potential to lead a growing, successful cell group does not reside with the gifted, the educated, or those with vibrant personalities. The answer, rather, is hard work. (34)"
- 4) Those who are bound-up
  - a. "Often the most effective cell leaders are God's treasures that simply need to be developed and unwrapped. Jesus is all-powerful. He's able to take the brokenness of sin, heal it, and transform us in the process. (35)"

**Principle: All cell members are potential cell leaders.**

- 1) What are some assumptions that stop me from seeing everyone as a potential leader?

- 2) Who is the next person in my group that I am going to work towards developing into a leader?

## **Chapter 3: Cell Reproduction: The guiding Star of Leadership Development.**

In this chapter Comiskey argues that leadership development is the key to reproducing a small group.

**Principle 1:** Reproducing a community group is the primary goal in develop leaders.

- 1) "Healthy small groups are constantly in need of new leaders because they seek to expand kingdom and reproduce new groups. (37-38)"
- 2) "The genetic code of cell multiplication is instilling in each leader from the first moment he or she begins leading the new group. (39)"
- 3) "Cell multiplication is so central to cell ministry that the goal of cell leadership is not fulfilled until the new groups are also reproducing. A new group can only be considered viable if it eventually births a new group itself. (39)"
- 4) Can I identify someone in my community group who I will invest in for the purpose of establishing as new community group?

## **Chapter 4: Developing Biblical Leaders**

In this chapter Comiskey looks at 4 major biblical principles of Christian leadership.

**Principle 1:** A Christian leader is dependent on God.

- 1) "A godly Christian leader must desire God above all else. (45)"

**Principle 2:** A Christian leader can overcome obstacles.

- 1) "A cell leader will face moments of discouragement, loneliness, and pain... A common assumption that many cell leaders make is that all conflict is 'bad' and should avoided if possible. Yet, if conflict can lead to deeper consideration of the issue at hand, and if it challenges members to look at their own behaviors, then it's beneficial to the group. (48)"

**Principle 3:** A Christian leader will have godly character.

- 1) "People are watching our lives... They want to make sure that the leader they are going to follow is credible and honest. Godly character refers to Christ's work in our actions, attitudes, and daily Christian lives. (51)"

**Principle 4:** A Christian leader is a servant first.

- 1) "According to Jesus, the greatest leaders were the most diligent servants. (52)"

## **Chapter 5: The Value of Effective Cell Leadership**

In this chapter Comiskey gives 10 principles that are necessary for cell leaders to be effective leaders.

**Principle 1: The effective cell leader must be willing to take risks.**

- 1) "A missionary organization wanted to send helpers to Dr. Livingston in Africa. The mission leader wrote, 'Have you found a good road to where you are? If so, we want to send other men to join you?' Livingstone replied, 'If you have men who will come only if they know there is a good road, I don't want them. I want men who will come even if there is no road at all.' Leaders make their own roads; they blaze their own trails. They are willing to risk for Jesus Christ. (56)"
- 2) What risk do you know you need to take but are afraid?

**Principle 2: The effective cell leader learns from their failures and become stronger as a result.**

- 1) "For the successful leader, failure is the springboard for hope. Jesus understood this principle. He allowed His disciples to experience ministry and even fail. But when they failed, Jesus used the experience of failure to train them more specifically. (56)"
- 2) What failure do you need to stop beating yourself up over and learn from?

**Principle 3: The effective cell leader must be diligent.**

- 1) "There is an old saying: 'Champions don't become champions in the ring – they are merely recognized there.' The diligent, secret training before the fight begins propels a boxer to win. Successful leaders work hard and success naturally follows. (59)"
- 2) 2 Timothy 2:15, "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth."
- 3) What is an area of diligence that you need to improve on and what are you going to do to improve on it?

**Principle 4: The effective cell leader is effective because of action not just talk.**

- 1) "John Hancock Field's said, 'All worthwhile men have good thoughts, good ideas, and good intentions, but precious few of them ever translate those into actions.' (62)"
- 2) Proverbs 14:23, "All hard work brings a profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty."
- 3) What is an action that needs to be implemented that will help your Community Group be more effective? What stops you from implementing this action?

**Principle 5: The effective cell leader has the ability to handle criticism.**

- 1) "When dealing with criticism, keep in mind these three principles:
  - a. "First, see the painful experience as an opportunity to grow in your faith."

- b. "Second, be as honest and up-front as possible. Don't avoid conflict. Talk with the person. Conflict grows through secrecy but fades with openness and truth."
- c. Third, don't be afraid to apologize as a leader – even before the whole group. (63)"

2) What is an area of conflict that you are avoiding?

**Principle 6: The effective cell leader is goal oriented.**

- 1) "It's essential that each cell leader set clear goals for the group. Those who set specific goals multiply their group more rapidly than those who do not. Effective goal setting is the primary catalyst behind successful cell multiplication. (64)"
- 2) Good goals are:
  - a. "First, a cell leader must set deadlines for his (or her) goals. (64)"
  - b. "Second, make sure the goal is attainable. (65)"
  - c. "Third, make the goals visible. (65)"

**Principle 7: The effective cell leader receive vision and direction from God.**

- 1) "Vision is the mother of goal setting. The two are intimately related. Goals are incubated in a warm, visionary environment. The environment that I'm referring to is prayer and meditation. Vision therefore, is primarily a Divine initiative – a gift from God. (66)"
- 2) What is the vision for your Community Group? Do you set goals that move you toward your vision?

**Principle 8: The effective cell leader spend their time talking about there vision so that others can build on their vision.**

- 1) "To choose a direction, a leader must first have developed a mental image of a desirable future state for the cell or church. The critical point is that a vision articulates a view of realistic, credible, attractive future; a condition that is better in some important ways than what currently exists. It is this distinction between the initial dream and the actual fulfillment that separates leaders from managers. (67-68)"
- 2) Are you doing all the work to move toward the vision or are you equipping your team to build toward the vision?

**Principle 9: The effective cell leader is good at communicating vision.**

- 1) "Rick Warren says, 'The #1 task of leadership is to continually clarify and communicate the purpose of the organization.' (68)"
- 2) How do you communicate your vision?

**Principle 10: The effective cell leader is free to adjust the vision when necessary.**

- 1) "Don't think that you can't make mid-stream corrections to your vision... A vision that is not adjusted to reality will probably fizzle out. (69)"
- 2) What adjustments do you need to make to your vision?

## Chapter 6: The Priorities of Effective Cell Leadership

In this chapter Comiskey gives several priorities that effective cell leaders give should give priority to.

### **Priority 1: Mentor potential leaders.**

- 1) “This passion to raise up new leaders drives successful cell leaders to spend quality time with potential leadership. This passion converts common cell members into visionary new leaders. Successful cell leaders reflect John Maxwell’s passion: ‘my goal is not to draw a following that results in a crowd. My goal is to develop leaders who become a movement.’ (72)”
- 2) What is your plan to mentor potential leaders?

### **Priority 2: Prayer**

- 1) Effective leaders both prepare themselves through prayer as well as pray daily for those in the cell group. Effective cell leaders also go one step further and promote prayer within the cell group. (73)”
- 2) How do you organize your leadership around prayer?

### **Priority 3: Radical evangelism**

- 1) In order to accomplish this goal, cell leaders should know the difference between cell evangelism and other types of evangelism. In a nutshell, cell evangelism is relational and ongoing as opposed to impersonal and immediate. (74)”
- 2) Are you honestly engaging in evangelism to grow your Community Group? How are you encouraging your Community Group to engage in evangelism?

### **Priority 4: Continual care**

- 1) “Discipleship naturally flows from evangelism in a cell group. (75)”
- 2) Who is in charge of continual care in your Community Group? What is the plan for continual care in your Community Group?

### **Priority 5: Making non-Christians feel welcome**

- 1) Rene and his wife Patricia welcome non-Christians. They make them feel like family. These non-Christians feel the liberty to share their fears, doubts, and feelings. (76)”
- 2) Do non-Christians feel welcome in your Community Group? If not, what needs to change so that they will feel welcome?

### **Priority 6: Consistent Visitation**

- 1) Here are some helpful principles that will guide you in your visitation of both newcomers and faithful members of the group.

- a. "First, visit the cell members systematically. In this way, a cell leader avoids excluding anyone."
- b. "Second, make the visit brief."
- c. "Third, visit strategically. Start with your future cell leaders; next visit the less committed; finally, visit the newcomers to the group. (79)"

**Questions:** How would you rearrange these priorities if you could? Why?

## Chapter 7: How Jesus Developed Leaders

In this chapter Comisky covers five principles in how Jesus develop leaders. He argues that the way Jesus developed leaders is how we should develop leaders.

**Principle: 1** Jesus developed leaders by calling people to discipleship instead of waiting for people to come to him.

- 1) "It's important to remember that Jesus called people out of the crowd, the multitude, to enter into a discipleship relationship with him. (84)"
- 2) How were you called to discipleship? How does this inform how you plan to call others to discipleship?

**Principle: 2** Jesus developed leaders by demonstrating truth not just teaching truth.

- 1) "Jesus evangelized people in the presence of His disciples and then instructed them afterwards. (84)"
- 2) What are you showing your assistant leaders?

**Principle: 3** Jesus developed leaders by concentrating on future leaders.

- 1) "Christ knew that He would need to concentrate on specific leaders in order to transform the world. Men, not programs, formed the basis of Christ's outreach to the world. (86)"
- 2) Have you identified your future leaders?

**Principle: 4** Jesus developed leaders by demanding obedience.

- 1) "Christ's disciples were willing to forsake all to follow Him (Lk. 5:11), and this was the one key ingredient that Christ required. (87)"
- 2) Do you have a problem with asking others to do what you ask? Where do you need to be more assertive?

**Principle: 5** Jesus developed leaders by expecting his leaders to reproduce.

- 1) "Christ's last command to His disciples clarifies the goal of His training. He expected His disciples to reproduce in their own disciples the same principles that he taught them. He commanded them to '...make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you' (Mt. 28:19-20). (88)"

## Chapter 8: Developing A Mentoring System

In this chapter Comiskey argues that every Community Group or cell leader should have a mentor in order to grow as a leader and maximize his or her effectiveness.

Comiskey defines mentoring as a “relational experience in which one person empowers another by sharing God-given resources. (90)”

He points out that there are different kinds of mentoring relationships.

- 1) **The sponsor mentor:** “A sponsor mentor is a mentor that knows something that you don’t, or who can open a door that you can’t. (92)”
- 2) **The counseling mentor:** “Mentoring is broad enough to include a word of counsel, an insight, or an encouragement. (92)”
- 3) **The peer mentor:** This is a two-way relationship where both persons share God-given resources.

Comiskey points out the elements of a mentoring relationship that should be taken into account when choosing a mentor.

- 1) **Role Modeling:** The mentor that you choose should be a role model that you would like to emulate.
- 2) **Attraction:** “Normally the person being mentored is attracted to the mentor because of the knowledge and resources that the mentor possesses. In other words, the person being mentored desires to possess what the mentor has. (95)”
- 3) **Relationship:** “Mentoring, then, first involves a caring relationship. (96)”
- 4) **Accountability:** “For mentoring to work, the mentoree must demonstrate an attitude of voluntary submission so that advice and assignments will be respected and fulfilled... If a mentor enters an intense, formal relationship with a mentoree, he or she should expect results. (97)”
- 5) **Questions:** Do you have a mentor to help you become a better community group leader? If not, who is someone that fits the above description that you can submit to in order to become a better leader?

## Chapter 9: Strategies For Developing Leaders

In this chapter Comiskey suggests three models for developing small group leaders, the *situational leadership model*, the *shepherd to rancher model*, and the *emergent leadership model*.

- 1) **Situational leadership model:** In this model the leader must adjust his or her goals and expectations to the abilities of the developing leader. Comiskey says, “A leader’s style is dictated by the needs of the follower. Simply put, there is no single style of leadership that will always be effective – it all depends on the maturity level of the followers. (102)”

- a. Comiskey goes on to point out that overly authoritarian leaders will tend to frustrate other mature leaders. Mature leaders should be given more autonomy.
- b. Overly democratic leaders will tend to frustrate inexperienced leaders. Inexperienced leaders should have more oversight and direction.
- c. **Question:** How confident are you at adjusting your leadership to the developing leaders you are working with?

2) **Shepherd to rancher model:** In this strategy the leader moves the developing leader from overseeing multiple individuals to overseeing multiple groups. He says, "A shepherd of a single flock of sheep give individual attention to each of the sheep in the flock. Such a shepherd is limited by his physical capacity to care for the sheep. A rancher, in contrast, has a number of shepherds under his care who do the actual shepherding of the flock. (105)"

- a. For a community group leader to develop they must move from shepherd to rancher.
- b. **Question:** Do you expect to lead multiple groups as you develop as a leader? Do you expect the leaders under you to lead multiple groups as they develop as a leader?

3) **Emergent leadership model:** In this model the developing leader recognizes where he or she is at in his or her development as a leader. Comiskey follows Clinton's 5 states of leadership development.

- a. Sovereign Foundations: "In this phase, God is working in the leader's personality to make the leader the person God wants him or her to be. (108)"
- b. Inner-Life Growth: "In this stage, the leader receives training. (108)"
- c. Ministry Maturing: "In this stage, the leader gains needed ministry experience. This is often more incidental than intentional. Like the first two stages, God is more interested in the development of the leader. (108)"
- d. Live Maturing: "In this stage, the leader identifies his or her gift-mix and uses it with power. This is a period in which giftedness emerges along with priorities. (108)"
- e. Convergence: "In this stage, everything flows together: gift-mix, location, experience, and temperament, Clinton says, 'Not many leaders experience convergence. Often they are promoted to roles that hinder their gift-mix.' He goes on to say, 'Leaders have a tendency to cease developing once they have some skills and ministry experience. They may be content to

continue their ministry as is, without discerning the need to develop further.' (108-109)"

- f. Comiskey following Clinton says that a developing leader will typically face two kinds of tests as they develop as a leader.
  - i. Obedience Test: "God will often test a leader in the area of obedience. Will the leader listen to God's voice and obey? A leader who repeatedly demonstrates that God speaks to him gains spiritual authority and respect from his follower. Having learned to discern God's direction for his own life in numerous crucial decisions, he can then shift to the leadership function of determining guidance for the group that he leads. (109)"
  - ii. Submission Test: "A developing leader will usually struggle with someone who is in authority over him. Learning submission is critical to learning what authority is, so emerging leaders must first learn to submit. (109)"
- g. **Questions**: Where are you in your emerging leadership development? What obedient tests have you faced? What submission tests have you faced?

## **Chapter 10: Guidelines for training cell leaders to reap the harvest**

In this chapter Comiskey lays down several guidelines for training cell group leaders.

**Guideline 1:** Train cell leaders how to accomplish specific tasks.

- 1) What leadership skill do you wish you knew better?

**Guideline 2:** Everyone trains to become a cell leader.

- 1) "When a church concludes that every cell member is a potential cell leader, the logical step is to train each person to lead a cell group eventually. (115)"
- 2) Are you informing all the members of the cell group that we want them all to prepare to lead a cell group of their own?

**Guideline 3:** Use on the job training to train cell leaders.

- 1) "How do adults learn best? Most of use would agree that we learn best when the education is personally meaningful – when the learning involves truth that is immediately applied to life. (115)"
- 2) How do you learn best?

**Guideline 4:** Training should have a clear beginning and end.

**Guideline 5:** Limit the requirements for cell leadership training.

- 1) “Many churches pile on years of Christian education before a person can lead a small group... These churches often lose the initial zeal of a young Christian’s leadership through an endless maze of requirements. Such churches put out people’s fire by over-training them in long, drawn-out courses before they get to actually minister. (119)”

**Guideline 6: Make cell training doable.**

- 1) “One of the most important factors is whether or not the leadership training is doable. (120)”

**Guideline 7: Train leaders through delegation.**

- 1) “The subtle tendency for each of us in cell ministry is to do it ourselves. At times it’s easier, more efficient, and time saving... If the cell leader does everything himself, the others in the cell group will miss out on the opportunity of exercising their spiritual gifts, serving, and learning new responsibilities. (122)”
- 2) Is there someone who can help you training the leaders in your group?

**Guideline 8: Limit titles when training cell leaders.**

- 1) “I personally don’t use titles such as assistant or intern for potential cell leaders. Rather, I tell all members in my cell group that each one of them will eventually be leading a cell group. Some will be closer to actually leading than others, depending on where he or she is in the equipping process. (125)”
- 2) How do you use titles in your small group?

**Guideline 10: Train facilitators as oppose to Bible teachers.**

- 1) A facilitator’s job description focuses on guiding the communication process, praying for cell members, calling, visitation, and reaching the lost for Christ. (126)”
- 2) Are you clear about what a facilitator is? Do you have any doubts about facilitation over Bible teaching?

**Guideline 11: Evaluate your cell leaders.**

- 1) “How well are you training your leaders? This question is hard to answer without concrete data. (132)”
- 2) Comiskey goes on to suggest that churches use several feed back tools to aid in the leadership development process:
  - a. Informal verbal feedback – casually talking to the leaders.
  - b. Formal verbal feedback – formal interviews with group leaders.
  - c. Written feedback – questionnaires.
  - d. Instant feedback – spontaneous evaluation comments during training sessions.

## Chapter 11: Models of Cell Leader Training

In this chapter Comiskey surveys three models of leadership training that a church can employ to train its leaders.

- 1) The cell model of training
  - a. The bulk of the leadership training takes place in a cell group by a cell leader.
- 2) The group training model
  - a. This model focuses on lots of up front training to prepare leaders for future cell group ministry.
- 3) The huddle model of training
  - a. This model has little up front requirement for leadership and focuses its efforts on non-cell leaders (staff pastors) doing leadership development outside of the cell group.
- 4) It is not important that we know how other churches train leaders. It is however important that we know how Ethnos trains leaders.
- 5) **Questions:** What model of cell leadership training does Ethnos use?

## Chapter 12: The Principles Behind the Models

In this chapter Comiskey reviews 7 principles that churches should use to develop leadership-training tracks.

“Sporadic training of individual leaders is common in many churches. Few churches, however, establish a systematic training system that produces large numbers of small group leaders. (157)”

### **Principle 1:** Keep the training track simple.

- 1) “I recommend using only four manuals or having only four steps. Most cell church equipping tracks prepare their leaders in the following four areas:
  - a. Basic doctrine
  - b. Inner-life Development
  - c. Personal evangelism
  - d. Leadership training (158)”
- 2) At Ethnos our basic leadership-training track has four elements.
  - a. (Basic doctrine) “Basic discipleship”
  - b. (Inner-life development) “Ordering your private world”
  - c. “Bondage Breaker”
  - d. (Leadership training) “Organic Discipleship”

### **Principle 2:** Provide action steps with the training.

- Basic Doctrine: Includes the action step of baptism in water
- Inner Development: Includes the action step of having a regular devotional time

- Personal Evangelism: Includes the action step of witnessing and inviting a non-Christian to the cell group
- Leadership Training: Includes the action step of leading a cell group (160)

**Principle 3: Prepare a second level of training for cell leaders.**

- 1) “My advice is to divide your training into at least two levels. The first level should include the four basic areas of steps (each area is normally embodied in a manual). It’s important that the first level is not too complicated and allows rapid preparation of cell leaders. The second level provides additional training for the cell leaders (second level training is only for those leading a cell group). (161)”
- 2) The second level of leadership training at Ethnos is
  - a. Leadership Explosion by Joel Comiskey
  - b. The Making of a leader by Robert Clinton

**Principle 4: Use only one equipping track.**

- 1) “After deciding on a church-wide training track (ideally both first and second level), a church should require that all future leaders pass through the same training. (162)”

**Principle 5: There is no one methodology for implementing your training.**

- 1) “From my study of the fastest growing cell churches around the world, I’ve noticed a great variety of methodologies for implementing the training model (e.g., one-on-one discipleship, one-on-two or three, training after the cell group, seminars, classes, retreats, or a combination of all of them.) (163)”

**Principle 6: Train everyone to become a cell leader.**

- 1) “Ideally, each new believer in the church should immediately start attending a cell group and begin the equipping track. In reality, it often takes more time... We don’t pressure those who refuse to enter our training to become cell leaders, but we’re constantly promoting it (both at the cell level and at the celebration level). (163)”
- 2) Are you promoting cell leadership at the community group level?

## **Chapter 13: Materials for training cell leaders**

In this chapter Comiskey covers the option of getting material for leadership training. Ethnos has chosen to develop their own material based upon the books and classes the leadership has both taken and read.

## **Chapter 14: What will you leave behind?**

In this chapter Comiskey argues that we leave a lasting legacy when we build strong capable leaders.