

The Rector's Reflections

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As discussion commences regarding the evangelization of Postmoderns through holistic cell groups, it is vastly important to first establish the essential principles of cell life. Jim Egli has “done extensive research on what makes cell groups work. He has discovered four values that must flow through the group in order for it to fully work. These values are summarized in the words Upward, Inward, Outward, Forward (UIOF)” (M. Scott Boren and Don Tillman, *Making Cell Groups Work: Navigating the Transformation to a Cell-Based Church*, 134). Thom Rainer describes why holistic cell groups are so significant to parish life:

It is difficult, if not impossible, to discern one particular type of church organization from Scripture. The pattern of a healthy church, however, can be gleaned from several passages of Scripture. Acts 2:42-47 is often cited as an example of a healthy church. Characteristics include teaching, fellowship, prayer, miracles, giving, meeting needs, praise, evangelism, and assimilation. Romans 12:10, Ephesians 4:2, and Ephesians 4:32 add to the list devotion, self-sacrifice, humility, gentleness, patience, love, kindness, compassion, and forgiveness. Galatians 6:2 includes the characteristic of caring for

each other's burdens: “Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.” First Thessalonians 5:11 adds to the functions encouragement and edification: “Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.”

These are a few of the passages that direct the body of believers toward their God-given roles. As you scan the characteristics of the church above, it is difficult to see how any structure other than small groups can best fulfill these needs. They allow for the ministry to a few by a few, rather than one or a few staff members attempting to meet the needs of hundreds or thousands. Christ Himself limited His immediate ministry group to the twelve. This is a pattern for Christians today (Thom S. Rainer, *The Book of Church Growth: History, Theology, and Principles*, 297-298).

Moreover, holistic cells, in fact, are vitally important to the conversion of pre-Christian Postmoderns. Thus, in order to reach this Postmodern age with the Gospel, evangelism (Matthew 28:16-20) will naturally (Mark 4:26-28; Acts 2:47) occur in holistic cell groups of 3-12 people who live together the Upward (Mark 12:30), Inward (Mark

12:31), Outward (Matthew 28:19), and Forward (Matthew 28:20) Biblical values of God's kingdom. Why is this the case? First, Evangelism in this Postmodern era "is a process. Evangelism takes time. Evangelism works through relationships. Evangelism involves teamwork (1 Corinthians 3:6)" (Ralph W. Neighbour, Jr., *Cell Leader Intern Guidebook*, 79). Consequently, the reciprocal actions of the Upward, Inward, Outward, and Forward values of the kingdom, in the communal life of the holistic cell, will organically produce new Christians:

Another significant matter about evangelism in the New Testament is that much of it – if not most of the more enduring type – took place in the house churches. This was true not simply because the larger homes were able to accommodate the function. It was also true because proclamation took place as a result of the total witness of the interrelated functions of church life in the homes (C. Kirk Hadaway, Stuart A. Wright, and Francis DuBose, *Home Cell Groups and House Churches*, 66).

Howard Snyder affirms this point with these words:

Neither Jesus, Peter nor Paul normally evangelized alone. Almost immediately after his baptism, Jesus had disciples around him – an incipient Christian community (Jn. 1:29-42). Jesus sent his disciples out

two by two, not one by one. Peter took others with him to Samaria and to Cornelius's house in Caesarea (Acts 8:14; 10:23). Paul was nearly always accompanied by one or more companions; Acts 13:13 speaks of "Paul and his company" (RSV) or "Paul and his companions" (NIV). Although there are exceptions to this pattern (Philip in Acts 8:4-8 and 8:26-40; Paul in Athens), they do seem to be exceptions, not the rule. Normally, where the missionaries went the Church went with them (in the sense of at least one companion), so that the evangelistic call was a call, in part, to an already-existing and demonstrated communal fellowship, a new way of living together. This gives new meaning to Jesus' statement about being present in the midst of two or three gathered believers (Mt. 18:20), as well as to household evangelism (Howard Snyder, *The Community of the King*, 124).

Join me next month as I introduce the Upward, Inward, Outward, and Forward values of God's kingdom.

Faithfully in Jesus Christ,

Greg J