

BREAKING THE 200 BARRIER IN CHURCH PLANTING

DOES THE CHURCH DESIRE TO GROW?

When a church begins to approach the 200 barrier there are several presumptions that need to be reviewed and articulated. The first presumption that most of Christendom has regarding growth, is that all churches desire to grow! This means they are willing to take steps that will help them grow. The second presumption is that the churches leadership has both a vision to grow and a commitment to grow. Many churches across America have never been taught about vision and thus have never been committed to such a vision. This is why there are so many churches that plateau after the five to seven year mark. Vision vitalizes all that you do for the cause of Christ Jesus' ultimate plan for that particular church. C. Peter Wagner says in his book Strategies for Church Growth: Goals for Effective Mission and Evangelism, that for any church to grow the Holy Spirit must be the primary source for our power! He continues that vision or goal setting is not void of God's sovereignty and the Holy Spirit's spontaneity. Presumption has been defined by Webster's Dictionary of the American Language as "the taking of something specific for granted; a reasoning that presumes; evidence that points to the probability of something, based on the proved existence of other facts." When you presume about church growth, the presumption is that all churches communicate to their visitors that they would love to get bigger and that they do not want to remain the same size. There is the presumption that churches desire to attract newcomers and have high visitor ratios. In church growth there is a presumption that a church would be willing to modify its leadership style so that growth could be encouraged. For the church desiring to break the 200 participant barrier the acronym that could be used is "Less of Me (the single staff pastor) and more of we (the multi-staffed team and laity volunteer).

Forty percent of the Churches in the United States today, are smaller than 200 members. (George Gallup) Yet the Bible says, "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost," (Luke 19:10) the heart of our mission is to provide the life changing news that Jesus Christ come to seek and to save the lost. Many small churches will not

like my following findings, but the remaining sections of this dissertation deal with people and churches that are experiencing spiritual renewal, beginning to reap a bountiful harvest, and desire help for making the most of their ministry potential!

Carl F. George states that once a church reaches or climbs over the 200 barrier, they will have more in common with other churches of their own size, than their denomination affiliation, church traditions, location, age, or any other isolatable factor. Lyle E. Schaller also makes the same observation as he points to the new peer group these churches and pastors will have. This new peer group consists of other pastor's and churches that have had to face the cruel question, "Are we going to remain the same or are we going to adjust our leadership style so that we can still reach others?"

In the United States of America the nine mainline protestant denominations report that 85 percent have an attendance on Sunday morning of 200 or less.(Lyle Schaller). This should not be surprising, when one considers that the majority of the available resources written

Once a church reaches or climbs over the 200 barrier, they will have more in common with other churches their own size than they do their own

on church growth have been developed for those churches under this numerical barrier. Far too often, the needs of pastors and churches growing beyond these barriers have not been considered. The large and still growing church is relatively a new phenomenon. Smallness has been around for centuries. Donald A. McGavran, the original church growth expert, says that many pastors of growing churches really do not possess a real understanding about why their church is growing. Growing churches have effective methodologies, whether they know it or not! Carl George lists sixteen distinctive growth methods that make up effective methodologies.

PREACHING AND REVIVALS

Your church revolves around enthusiastic, firebrand preaching or has experienced genuine revival from an outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

SUNDAY SCHOOL

Your church's growth is fueled by Sunday school momentum.

BUS MINISTRY

Your church reaches new families through bus captains who knock on doors and shuttle children to special programming.

INTENTIONAL POSITIONING

Your church targets a specific population segment.

MUSIC CENTER

Your church attracts musicians and other art lovers through a continual cycle of performances, choirs, and ensembles.

PULPIT TEACHING AND ORATORY SKILLS

Your church is known as a teaching center where people's notebooks may be bigger than their Bibles.

MIRACLE MINISTRY

Your church focuses on such signs and wonders as healing and deliverance.

CAPTURE-BY-COMMITTEE INVOLVEMENT

Your church builds loyalty by putting newcomers on a committee as soon as possible.

DAY SCHOOLS

Your church sponsors a Christian school, which serves as a bridge for people to participate in other church activities.

NEXT-DOOR-TO-THE-RIGHT-INSTITUTION SYNDROME

Your church draws from a nearby denominational college, hospital, or other institution.

HIGH-VISIBILITY AND HIGH-PROFILE GUESTS

Your church features a steady stream of media personalities.

APPEALING, MIXED-MEDIA SEEKER SERVICES

Your church combines preaching, artistic ensembles, and multimedia entertainment targeted at the unchurched.

MULTIPLE STAFF

Your church staff is comprised of gifted evangelists who pour the

bulk of their energies into visitation and outreach.

IMMIGRATION AND COLONIZATION

Your church is a large ethnic community such as Scandinavians or Cambodians.

SUBCONGREGATIONS OF ADULTS

Your church is a collection of large Sunday schools, women's ministries, or other sizable groups.

As you can see just these sixteen offer any pastor an array of growth designs and growth variables in which to minister. At this time they serve simply to call to our attention that there are ways any church can grow if it is willing to pay the price. It has been said that there are almost as many church growth principles as there are growing churches in America. (C. Kirk Hadaway) What then does a pastor of a church approaching 200 participants need to understand? The first is the organization structure of its people.

UNDERSTANDING STAKEHOLDER SYMMETRY

Let's look at the four very different groups in a congregation.

I had a very disillusioned laymen talk with me at a conference recently. He told me how he had joined a tiny congregation which was pastored by a young enthusiastic evangelistic pastor. "For two years I have loved being at my church as we grew together. Attendance climbed weekly and after a while we needed more parking space and Sunday School facilities."

All of this sounded great until he told me that last month in his churches business meeting one of the original charter members stood up and to the surprise of the membership brought a list of twenty-seven charges against the young pastor. After this member finished with his charges, he brought a motion to dismiss their minister. This occurred just as the pastor was beginning his fourth year at the church. The charge that most impressed the laymen at my conference was that the man who brought the motion to dismiss has one very unique charge that I found interesting. He said, "Our Minister has lead us to grow, but he just doesn't seem to know when to stop!"

This incident contains two ominous warnings for those who would rather not learn from direct experience.

NEW GUARD AND OLD GUARD

When the new guard in the church nears equality with the old guard in voting power, the old guard often feels threatened.

MINISTER'S AGENDA BEGINS TO CONFLICT WITH OLD GUARD AGENDA

Some time after the four year period, a congregation begins to realize that the minister's agenda for the future may contradict some of the long-established member's agendas. This the struggle that is commonly known as conflict between the pioneers and homesteaders.

Pastor's usually have been taught classes in College and Seminary about Church Administration, but seldom have they been taught about leading various people from all walks of life. At issue is a principle called stakeholder symmetry, which any effective leader must understand, whether in the business world or the church. This concept says that every organization includes a huge contingent of people called stakeholders--those with an investment in what you are doing. They care very deeply that in your enthusiastic pursuit of the organization's future you do not forget the powerful contingent who helped create the past. Stakeholder symmetry offers the pastor a ray of hope amidst caution. The hope is based on the attempt to reach a new group of people not currently being reached with ministry. The caution is that though there will be progressive members willing to march forward, proceed carefully lest a certain group of partisan's attempt to obstruct your progression. Almost every person, in every church, is party to a special interest. One crowd may have a deep concern about your church building, another about your Christian day school, another about foreign missions, and yet another about denominational issues. Wise pastors desiring to break this numerical barrier will take all of the "particular interest" groups in the church into careful consideration. Those who could be left out will feel alienated and at the first opportunity attempt to defeat the overall progress of the march.

So how do you find, identify, and approach these stakeholders?

First, one needs to realize that some of your churches stakeholders will be insiders in the work of the Church.

Often the first group a pastor must confront are those on the inside that do not want to see their way of life change. These could be as low on an organizational chart as ushers and as high as full-time professional staff. Between these two opposite ends of the spectrum could lie chair members; Sunday School teachers; youth workers, parents of youth, youth themselves; or perhaps even preschool workers.

The second group of stakeholders can often be outsiders.

These would be those individuals, families, or groups which your church influences for the positive or the negative. They could be home owners that live around your church property and are "concerned" about all the activity or noise taking place at your church. Many of these concerns would be directed towards growing churches that have parking problems and park on the city easements in front of their homes. Others could be politicians who fear your church's opinion and stance on related political issues. All of these outsiders hold an interest in the church and how it is operated.

The third group of stakeholders are in the realm of the invisible.

It is fully appropriate to identify God both as owner and stakeholder in the progress of his church. After all, Scripture likens the church to the bride of Christ (Eph. 5:25-32; Rev. 22:17), the body of Christ (Rom. 12:4-8; I Cor. 12:12-27; Col. 1:18), the family of God (Gal. 6:10; Heb. 2:11; I Peter 4:17), and many other relationships of united purpose. Carl F. George says, "in opposition to God and his angels are the devil and other evil principalities. Their stake in your church is to thwart your advances."

All stakeholders have the ability to make choices regarding the resources they control, whether tangible things like money, or interpersonal influences such as the ability to give or withhold permission. Their participation or boycott is based on their own agendas, purposes, and goals, which may or may not be in agreement with what you are trying to do. Additionally, there are strong relationships between individual stakeholders. Many a non-growth minded coalition has risen in a church to squelch a push towards expansion. Way of life usually seems to play a vital part in these stakeholders decisions.

THE BERRY BUCKET THEORY OF CHURCH GROWTH

In the book, Leading and Managing Your Church: Effective Management for the Christian Professional, Robert E. Logan develops further this stakeholder issues. I present a summary to further clarify stakeholder symmetry. They refer to this issue as Berry Buckets.

If there is any one stakeholder issue that most frequently causes grief in churches, it stems from a combination of age and tenure factors. This problem, more than any other I have observed, is a major dynamic in pastoral dismissals and church splits. I summarize the principles of the problem by calling it the "berry bucket" theory of church leadership.

The image is this. In the root cellar of my uncle's farm was a two-shelf storage space for berries gathered from his garden. He dated the berries, as they awaited further processing, by placing yesterday's pick on the bottom shelf and today's pick on the top. Churches are like root cellars in the sense that they tend to store the "crop" in different identifiable clusters. On the bottom shelf is the older guard, and on the top shelf is the newer crowd. The buckets on the bottom shelf represent church members who have been around for awhile. The bucket on the left contains the ripest berries which are the individuals with the longest tenure. Some are empty nesters. Some helped start the church. In these two buckets on the bottom shelf are many leaves. Leaves represent money. There can be no escaping the fact that this bucket contains clout.

The determining factor is the tenure of the present senior pastor. Those on the bottom shelf, who have been at the church longer than the pastor, are "formerberries." The "new berries," on the top shelf are those

drawn to the church since the present pastor's arrival.

One further distinction: Those younger than the pastor are either "junior formerberries" or "junior newberries."

What help does this classification system offer? Each of these four groups has a different perception of the pastor's role. Each group, in turn, requires a different leadership style. By recognizing that there are basically four "buckets" represented in a typical church, a pastor can learn to perceive the dissimilar expectations each group brings. In so doing the pastor can anticipate and nip in the bud much church conflict.

Here is how each of these groups would view you if you were their senior pastor:

The first two groups mentioned here view pastoral leadership in an entirely different way than the formerberries. Except for those who are very well churched (who already know that a new pastor is rarely the leader of the church), they tend to see the pastor as the one who makes things happen.

NUMBER ONE: JUNIOR NEWBERRIES (80% of newberries)

The easiest people to lead are the junior newberries. This group sees the pastor in a strong leadership light. They probably joined the church because of the pastor or the pastor's spouse. For this group, the pastor is the leader. They are younger than you and they came to the church after you. Therefore, they tend to take your word about life experiences (you're probably "ahead" of them) and about what happened earlier in the church (they weren't there, but you were). They almost have no choice but to be influenced by you.

Junior newberries perceive you as their leader or even as commanding officer. In most cases, all you need do for them to follow you is to announce where you are going and then to lead the charge. Newberries often are those willing to join the worker positions in the church organization. Interestingly, Formerberries are often comfortable allowing new people to take these responsibilities. Pastors tend to be close to this group because they are responsive to the pastor. Often formerberries become jealous of the newberries relationship with the pastor and they long for the same close relationship.

A forty-two-year-old minister, for instance, will find that the people most excited about joining the church will be, in most cases, in the thirty-five to forty age range. In other words, most pastors find it easiest to win people two to ten years younger than themselves.

NUMBER TWO: SENIOR NEWBERRIES (20% of newberries)

Those parishioners who are older than their pastor may respect his or

her judgment in some areas, but because they have "been around" longer, they withhold judgment on other issues.

For example, if I visit a church led by a younger clergyman, I can usually buy his enthusiasm for marriage and his excitement about his young family. When it comes to his advice on how to handle my teenage kids, however, I will hear him out but probably not accept it with full credibility.

How do pastors work with senior newberries? They suggest what they would like to see done, they present their rationale and research, and they invite their senior newberries to follow along.

Pastors cannot automatically expect to be trusted until they can show their homework. Why? Senior newberries have lived long enough to see leaders behave foolishly. They will not follow their pastor until they are convinced that he is acting with wisdom. Some Senior Newberries join churches just so they can become a leader in a smaller organization since they were not thought of as leadership material in a larger one. This is a very dangerous senior newberry and caution should be exerreted.

NUMBER THREE: SENIOR FORMERBERRIES (60% of formerberries)

The hardest people to lead are those who were part of the church before you came and who are also older than you. Although they may belong to the group that called you to lead their church, that is not what they really want you to do. Rather, they probably think they hired you to stand in their pulpit, lead the worship service, preach, help them raise their budget, handle weddings and funerals, and visit them in the hospital. In short, they frequently view the pastor as the chaplain or the hired hand.

Senior formerberries cannot be led in the same way as junior newberries. You lead the younger group by suggestion and excitement--by a dream appropriate to you in your present life stage. They accept it, because they like you and can identify with your vision. But the group who preceded you had all kinds of ideas before you came. You represented only a part of their ideal for their future. You were the best fit they could find. To provide leadership to senior formerberries, you need to listen carefully as you ask them, "What do you think God is calling this church to do and be? What directions are we heading? Where are we going? What are we doing?"

Then provide leadership for them to reach their objectives. As you empower their dreams, they will increasingly trust--and permit--your leadership to the rest of the church. Or, to restate it humorously, the minister's modus operandi goes like this: I am their leader so I follow them. As soon as I find out where they want to go, I'll stand at the head of the line so I don't look bad. I would add: Do not get too far ahead of that line or you will turn around and not find them. Instead, stay close enough that you can know when they turn, and then change course with them.

Young pastors often have a hard time with this perspective, because it may be alien to their dreams of exerting power. There is a difference between leading and providing leadership, however. Or, to repeat one unknown wit: The difference between a leader and a martyr is about three paces. The longer you are in the church, the more trust you earn from senior formerberries, and the more the church's vision will unify around your personal vision. This group has gone through the thick and the thin. They have formed close relationships with one another because they have raised their families together. In every way, they have a stronger commitment to each other than to a new pastor.

This groups usually provides more financial support of an organization than they do to new programs. They exert strong control over the budget. If they are organizational workers, they have long since determined their niche. Examples of these would be the Sunday School Leader, Subday School Secretary, the Treasurer, the Nursery Worker who has kept the job for years.

Are there any exceptions? One involves founding pastors. In some ways no one can "outformerberry" them, because no one was there ahead of them. Church-planting pastors, therefore, frequently do not have to deal with as many permission issues as clergy in established churches. Lyle Schaller points out another important exception. Some long-established mainline churches seem dead in the water. When you ask where they are going, the people indicate that what they are best at is sitting. Schaller says their primary agenda is to avoid getting very deeply involved. His advice to pastors is, "Don't try to out passive the passive." In other words, try to stay connected with the church, keep loving them, but also set before them some goals consistent with what they are capable of accomplishing In the process, teach them then to be more active.

Understand a critical key here in regard to Senior Formerberries: the pastor is not called to lead the church! This group expects the new pastor to be a receiver of instructions, not a giver of orders. They look at the pastor as a chaplain who helps and comforts the troops, but not the commander of the batallion. They call the pastor to help, but that is just face value. They want him to go to work as they step back, but that work ought to match the pattern they expect.

NUMBER FOUR: JUNIOR FORMERBERRIES (40% of formerberries)

These are usually the children of the senior formerberries. They are the hardest group to peg, because sometimes they accept the view of their elders (the senior formerberries) and sometimes they side with newcomers to the church (the newberries). Both Logan and George concluded that leading these types of people is not easy. Often when dealing with the stakeholders it is a matter of well-intended but sadly non-strategic priorities. When dealing with these stakeholders in the church it requires the wearing of many hats each day in leading people. Junior formerberries usually have children living at home or are of childbearing age.

Remember, if the pastor is successful over the first several years, it

creates a church that is heavy with Senior Formerberries on the bottom shelf and Junior Newberries on the top shelf. Churches that have been around for more than two decades, tend to show a heavier concentration of Senior Formerberries. Oddly, they often mandate the new, frequently young pastor, to reach out to young families. If the pastor is successful over the first several years, it creates a church that is heavy with Senior Formerberries on the bottom shelf and Junior Newberries on the top shelf. This period of delicate balance commonly takes place between the fourth and sixth years of a given pastorate.

At times I want to protest whether the church should be this way, but in the majority of cases it is. Successful pastoral leadership requires strategies that correspond to realities. And the Berry Buckets are so very real. So it pays to understand the berry-bucket dynamic, and the various perspectives of the pastor and the four groups.

BEWARE OF THE BERRY BATTLES!

Here are a few examples of berry battles:

Newberries filling leadership, but looked down upon by Formerberries.

Formerberries providing the bulk financially, but newberries spending it.

Formerberries making policy decisions for the Newberries to follow.

Newberries in a building mode while Formerberries in a maintaining mode.

Newberries want to use a van, Formerberries explain why they can't use the church van.

Formerberries seldom grant approval of the techniques Newberries use in cleaning the kitchen.

Newberries use the church more and get it dirty, Formerberries speak of the conflict of loss of turf control.

Formerberries will not give over the leadership to the pastor and he as a newberry eventually leaves in frustration or is kicked out. When this happens usually the Newberries leave as well. The point is that the Formerberries usually win the berry battle and in so doing they officiate at the church's final destruction.

Helping bring together the Formerberries and the Newberries can seem endlessly time consuming. However, it is absolutely necessary. Until pastors form relationships with the more tenured members, they will not be able to lead the church effectively through either lasting growth or change. These relationships never come quickly. Because of this, the most productive period in a given pastorate usually will come after several years and probably at least one survived leadership crisis. To survive requires a pastor to know from which bucket a berry comes.

COMMON DENOMINATORS OF LAITY IN 200 PLUS CHURCHES

For the church of 200 participants what are the common denominators? What is it that 200 plus congregations have in common? When looking at the growth strategy of these churches the number one question that must be answered according to Schaller is: "will the members accept an active role in implementing the particular growth strategy." (Schaller) This is the point at which a strategy for a congregation often differs sharply from the most effective evangelistic approach for a small church or a large congregation., In the small church, an effective strategy can be implemented with the active support of only a handful of members and the passive permission of the rest of the people. In the large church, the pastor or the senior minister usually has to take a very active and aggressive role in building a capability to reach, attract, and assimilate new members into each organization, board, class, circle, committee, and group in that large and complex organization.

The second of these five components in a church growth strategy for a 200 participant church is that, unlike small-membership churches, where changes in the attitudes and actions of the members usually occur after the impact of a church growth strategy has been felt, in most middle-sized congregations the changes in the attitudes and actions of the members usually must precede the preparation and implementation of a strategy for numerical growth. Schaller believes frequently this means an increase in the level of discontent with the status quo, a renewal of the desire to reach out beyond the membership, and an active effort to reflect on God's call to the congregation. Out of that effort can come the redefinition of role, or a new statement of purpose about the "business" the middle-sized congregation sees itself engaged in, so that a means-to-an-end goal no longer is allowed to dominate the agenda. In other churches this means the widespread acceptance and support of a theological belief system that motivates the members to want the congregation to grow and to be eager to do those things that will cause it to grow. In a few churches, the big change will be an end to the bickering, the scapegoating, the griping, and the negativism that have dominated the life and immobilized the outreach of that congregation for years.

The third component in a church growth strategy for a 200 participant church is, looking at three diagnostic indicators that have content and symbolic value. Often a clue to church attitudes can be gained. Do the members wear name tags every Sunday morning? In addition to the obvious value of helping everyone learn and remember the names of others, the presence or absence of name tags also symbolizes the members' expectations. Do we really expect strangers week after week? Another symbolic indicator is the presence or absence of exterior and interior directional signs. Do we really expect people to come to this building who have never been here before? Or do we expect only those people who have been here and already know their way around? Finally, do we reserve two or more parking spaces for visitors and label them accordingly? Even more important, symbolically, do our members never park in these spaces reserved for visitors? Those three diagnostic questions can be asked to test the members'

attitudes toward growth.

A fourth component in a church growth strategy for a 200 participant church is the role the pastor of that local church plays. This is especially important in the pastors leadership role, abilities, and style. Everything rises and falls on leadership in the 200 participant church. Lyle Schaller says that an effective pastor in the mid-size church is nondirective. The effective pastor is a quarter-back who is an active participant in every part of the strategy, not a coach on the sidelines. The effective pastor accepts the responsibility of leading, of initiating, of motivation, of planning ahead, but does not carry the ball on every play. The effective pastor in the middle-sized congregation needs to be able to trust the other players on the team. The effective pastor should not try to do it all, but must see to it that everything does get done, and that means trusting other people.

The last component in a church growth strategy for a 200 participant church is that churches of this size are mostly different. Thus it is impossible to prescribe a comprehensive strategy that will be appropriate for every congregation in this size bracket. A more useful approach is to raise a series of questions that can inform the development of a strategy tailored to the particular congregation.

Religion is the best armor a man can have, but it is the worst cloak.

THE BARRIER EXPLODED

If a church desires to explode the 200 barrier in church growth, there are six things necessary to break these barriers:

NUMBER ONE: THE PASTOR AND CHURCH MUST EXUDE A CONTAGIOUS DESIRE TO GROW

This single factor makes a critical difference for growing churches. I have called this a creative discontent. Pastors need a healthy discontent in order not to get use to complacency.

NUMBER TWO: ARTICULATE CLEARLY WHY YOUR CHURCH IS GROWING AND WHAT INGREDIENTS NEED TO BE CONTINUED AND STAKED

A careful look at your churches historic past and current present will enable you to diagnose why your church is growing.

NUMBER THREE: THE PASTOR NEEDS TO SWITCH FROM THE SHEPHERD (I take care of everyone) TO THE RANCHER (I take care of the care givers) STYLE OF PASTORAL LEADERSHIP

Pastoral leaders of larger congregations all have the ability to switch from the "I will shepherd all my people individually" leadership style to the "I will pastor the entire congregation but shepherd all of my shepherds (care givers) individually" leadership style.

NUMBER FOUR: THE PASTOR MUST DEAL WITH FACTORS IN THE CHURCH ORGANIZATION THAT KEEP IT UNDER 200

Why do the senior members of a congregation not always receive newcomers with open arms? Your present membership probably has a strong desire to preserve its social intimacy. Their present size allows everyone to know, or to know about, everyone else. As a result, they are probably fearful of anything--such as new people--that threatens the closeness and familiarity they have with one another.

Some time after four years, a congregation begins to realize the minister's agenda for the future may contradict some of the long-established member's

People, including Christians, like to be comfortable. If they are convinced that growth will upset the family feeling they associate with "their" church, they may establish a surprising number of turf-protection barricades to keep new members from being absorbed.

NUMBER FIVE: THE PASTOR MUST CONSTANTLY GUARD AGAINST A SMALL-CHURCH PHILOSOPHY AND MENTALITY CREEPING BACK INTO YOUR CONGREGATION

If you, like most ministers and lay leaders, have been shaped by a long-term pattern of small-church thinking, be prepared for the pressures that may lure you back into that paradigm. One source that will arise will be the expectations of your church members, maybe even your spouse, and also any codependency tendencies, you have as a pastor which can be contracted by small church thinkers. These could be as simple as uninformed habits of lifelong members to sabotage or slander the less spiritual members. Conrad Lowe says that even if the shepherding style of leadership helps produce growth for a time, you will reach a stopping point eventually.

NUMBER SIX: PASTORS NEED TO ESTABLISH, TRAIN, AND CONTINUALLY DEVELOP A NETWORK OF LAYMEN LED SMALL GROUPS

This is the place where lay leaders will develop further for the Lord. Peter Wagner, one of today's leading authorities on church growth, says, "the major difference between the church under the 200 barrier and one over the 200 barrier is fellowship groups." He explains why a church must move from single cell to multiple cell if it is to grow beyond 200:

The group dynamic theory that underlies this is the rule of 40. Forty people is the ideal size for everyone to maintain face-to-face relationship with everyone else. In a church setting the group can expand to 80 and sustain most of the interpersonal qualities. However, when it goes past 80 toward 200, the relationships are increasingly strained. By the time it gets to 150 most groups are so stressed out that they can no longer handle the thought of strangers entering the group and thereby increasing the stress. Without knowing they are doing it or without even wanting to, they relate to strangers like two identical poles of magnets.

It is best to pray over the Bible than to brood over the self.

Carl Dudley in his book Making the Small Church Effective was one of the first writers to develop this concept. Elmer Towns, vice president of Liberty University and Dean of their school of Religion confirms that the wave of the future is in body life through cells groups. "To be a whole church, it must have the cell as well as the celebration," he says. Elmer Towns finds this model to be eminently biblical:

The large group in the Jerusalem church met for celebration, preaching, motivation and testimony (see Acts 3:11); and in small cells for fellowship, accountability, instruction and identity (see Acts 5:42). From these observations, I conclude that the norm for the New Testament church included both small cell groups and larger celebration groups.

As pastors, we can see quickly the potential as lay people are released to do the work of the ministry. These are the six things necessary to break the 200 church growth barrier.