

Small Group Diagnostic Tool

Goal:

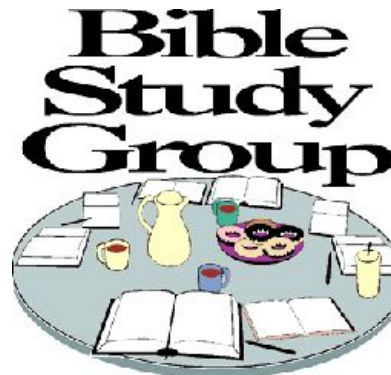
Discipleship lived out together in Mission

Examining our small group/discipleship life
through a MC lens.

4 Stages of Development

Common transitions in the life of our Missional Communities, the 4 stages are:

1. Community Group
2. Small Group
3. Team of Missionaries
4. Missionary Team



**JESUS WAS
IN A SMALL GROUP.
I'M JUST SAYIN'...**

{ life change happens in small groups }



Stage 1 Community Groups

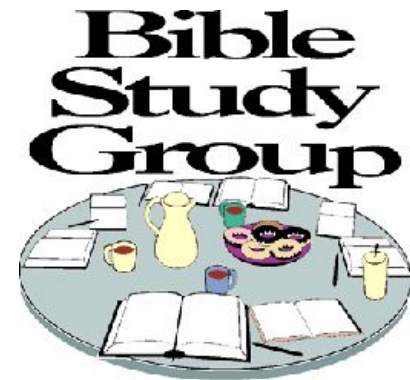
Definition

Most groups begin with this DNA. A Community Group is one where the people enjoy spending time together in a gathered event, possibly desire to go through a book or bible study, but lack any impulse towards those outside of the church.

Primarily, these kinds of communities come into existence because a group of people have a felt need for community – hence “community group”. These kinds of groups have relationships that are newly forming or shallow, and generally gather only for an event.

Observations:

- community groups are organized around topics/book studies/bible studies
- a place to connect and make friends
- Often formed to facilitate relationship
- What holds them together? Interest in the topic and affinity with those in the group



STAGE 1- COMMUNITY GROUP

Main Obstacle to Mission

Collectively, this group has what we call a “want to” problem when it comes to mission. They may know that they should care about people far from God, but their activity as a community shows that it is not a priority for them.

There are often practical obstacles as well (geographic limitations, lack of knowledge, unfamiliarity in relationships, etc.), but primarily people in these kinds of communities do not believe they are actually missionaries to our city.

Key Transition Point To “Small Group”

This group begins to shift as people’s conversations and prayers begin to become outward focused.

Main Coaching Point

Many people in the missional community world tend to write these kinds of groups off. I’ve challenged them in the past, but I see so much opportunity when the saints of God are gathered that we need to have a next step for them.

In our experience, a community group needs to be hard pressed with the truth of the gospel and the imperative of disciple making. Their need is not so much practical, as it is sin rooted deep in their heart. This sin masquerades as many different things, but collectively a community group must see the greatness of the gospel and see the joy in following Jesus in seeking out those far from God.

Practically, we’ve found that training a group like this together is crucial. They often will not make a transition collectively if you only train them as individuals.

The tool we often embed at this point is the **Life Transformation Group**, and specifically focus attention on the community’s prayer on the lost.

Stage 2 Small Groups

Definition

As a Community Group begins to have a heart change, a Small Group emerges. This is a community where people have a desire to make disciples but don't quite know how. Rather than needing a change of heart, these kinds of groups need to work through a host of practical challenges.

Often times Small Groups still have relationships that are newly forming, but they have gone through a significant experience together (a training that casts compelling vision, a crisis in the group, etc.) or there are very few natural barriers to their community (the groups that just "click").

Observations

- Most XA Groups start here because of our commitment to discipleship
- We form small groups for discipleship although we may not be clear in how to proceed in making disciples... often struggling between content and practice.

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STAGE 2- SMALL GROUPS

Main Obstacle to Mission

Whereas a Community Group has a “want to” problem, a Small Group has a “how to” problem when it comes to mission. Generally, they want to make disciples but have never seen it modeled and are not sure what it actually looks like.

Often times the biggest hurdle to cross in this stage is helping them understand when they gather in different ways, not every person in the community needs to participate. Attempting to align 12 to 15 schedules together is nearly impossible, so our best coaching is to try and think differently about gatherings and to redefine success for them.

Key Transition Point To “Team of Missionaries”

This group begins to shift as people start to put into practice rhythms that enable them to hang out with their friends far from God in natural ways. When a Small Group has actual names of people to pray for and ask God to save, and those people start to show up in places with the community, they are headed in the right direction!

Main Coaching Point

A Small Group needs to be given practices and rhythms that facilitate a life of intentionally making disciples. Practically as a community, they need to spend time walking through how Third Place, The Family Meal and LTG’s would happen each month so they can start putting their desires into action.

We coach Small Groups to find places where 2 to 4 people can gather to live out the rhythms, and occasionally try to gather everyone in the community at more convenient times.

We have also found that often times a group will try different gatherings a couple times, then abandon them because they “didn’t work”. We work very hard to teach them that these practices are not a magic bullet, but healthy rhythms that will produce more faithful communities over time.

Terms broken down

- ❑ **3rd Place**- Natural Regular Places to intersect with specific group of lost people (gym, coffee shop)
- ❑ **LTG (Life Transformation Group)** – very similar to our weekly discipleship meetings (but done in 3-4 person groups)
- ❑ **Family Meal**– Very similar to our small group gathering but always starts with a meal together and comfortable getting up to 12-15 people.

Stage 3

Team of Missionaries

Definition

As a Small Group begins to implement the practices of missional communities, there are often some realizations that take place within that community. The first is how life giving a missional expression of community can be, and second is how challenging this kind of community lifestyle actually is.

As individuals in the community understand their identity as missionaries and put practices in place consistent with that identity, a Team of Missionaries emerges.

A Team of Missionaries is a group that is seeking to make disciples in each individual's separate sphere of influence. While the group members may live in different parts of the city, work in different places and have different interests, each individual is praying for people by name and seeking to share the good news of the gospel of Jesus.

We often say this kind of community “gathers for community, but scatters for mission”.

Observations

- XA Groups that see the small group not as an end in itself but as a movement to reach other people.
- Small Group Leaders often start to think as missionaries
- We start grappling with the people that are all around us that are lost



STAGE 3- Team of Missionaries

Main Obstacle to Mission

A Team of Missionaries is lacking one thing as a missional community – what we call The Community Apologetic. Whereas most church leaders would be elated to have a church full of Teams of Missionaries, there is still one more major step to be made for us.

We aren't satisfied just with a Team of Missionaries because a gospel-centered community is the most persuasive argument they have to offer their non-believing friends.

The major obstacle to overcome for a Team of Missionaries is to integrate their lives together, overlapping the places they live, work and play.

Key Transition Point To “Missionary Team”

This group begins to shift as their desire for the salvation of others goes from the individuals they know to the larger people affiliations they are a part of. Often this means people leaving to either join a MC that is already reaching the people they are passionate about or starting a new MC to reach those people.

Main Coaching Point

A Team of Missionaries will need to begin thinking of how they can consolidate their various mission fields. More often than not, we help them practice Third Place cohesively and frequently by helping them identify two to four different Third Places that different people in the group are a part of regularly.

Primarily, we're looking for places of overlap in their lives – do they have same classes, do they work in the same place, are there distinct overlaps in hobbies or activities? Finding places of commonality helps them establish effective Third Places.



Stage 4 Missionary Team

Definition

A new community often forms into a Community Group, then transitions from a Small Group to Team of Missionaries. As these transitions take place, the mission of the group is growing in clarity, and often going from generic to very specific and local.

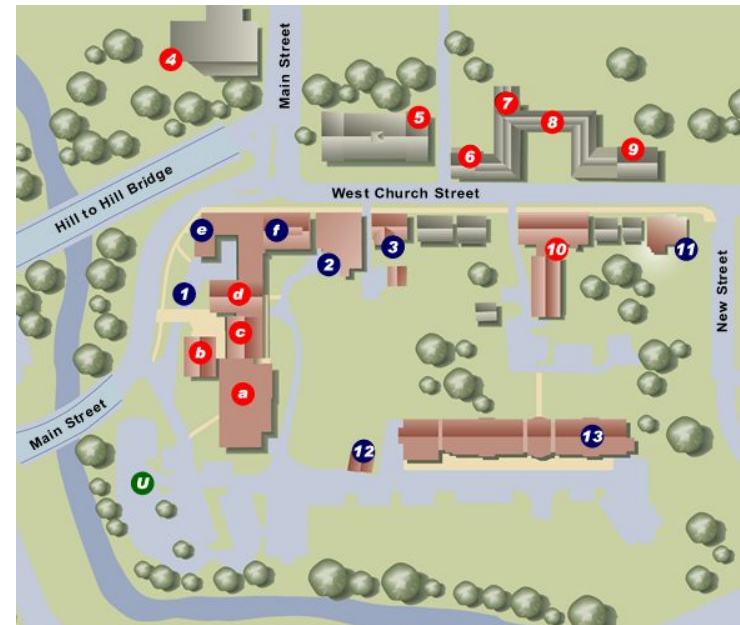
A Missionary Team has a core group of committed people trying to reach a defined pocket of people. This kind of community is the truest form of how we define missional community.

Observations

- Clarifies as we understand the specific group we are living missionally together to love and reach.

Geographic and demographic break down

- South Dorm
- Fraternity Row
- Art Students
- Music Students
- Latinos etc.



STAGE 4- Missionary Team

Main Obstacle to Mission

Although a Missionary Team is doing an excellent job of living life together on mission, there are all kinds of challenges that exist.

More often than not, we have found that Missionary Teams are discouraged by a perceived lack of progress and the mundane nature of mission. Having worked through all kinds of transitions, a Team of Missionaries can struggle with faithfully and deliberately living life together over time.

The second struggle that many Missionary Teams face is multiplication – how and when do we multiply? Often times the struggle begins when someone comes to faith in Christ, and the dynamic of the group changes.

Main Coaching Point

On the coaching front, Missionary Teams will need practical tools when it comes to leading someone to Jesus. How do you baptize and disciple a new believer is a big question we deal with. We also teach them when and how to multiply – you multiply when a new leader has emerged, or you multiply your community when a clear opportunity for mission presents itself.

Missionary Teams often don't need more practices or coaching, they need pastoring and encouragement to remain steadfast in their relationships with non-believers, even when it seems like nothing is happening.



STAGE 1- COMMUNITY GROUP

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Processing Together

1. What Group Stage best represents the way your small groups function?
2. In your philosophy and practice of small group discipleship... is missional life together strong and vibrant?
3. What can we learn from this diagnostic that may help us to be a more effective missional discipleship community?