

FORMULA TWELVE

The Formula of Community
Leader's Notes



The Formula of Community

One Focus

People will not become long-term members of a local church without significant relationships. These relationships thrive best in groups that focus on loving people and God.

By utilizing the Formula of Community and structuring your church around One Focus, you will achieve an expandable small group model that will ensure discipleship in growing deeper and growing larger.



The Formula of Community

A Need for Community

“Today, people outside and inside the church share a common desire; community. Americans are among the loneliest people in the world.” - Gallup Organization

Our lives are so busy and task focused that we have scheduled our way out of one of our most basic needs: relationships. If I asked almost anyone in your church about their personal relationships, I would discover fewer relationships and less fulfillment than every before.

If our 1 Focus centers around helping people grow in relationship to God and people we will create a contagious community, similar to the early church of Acts.



The Formula of Community

Biblical Community

*“So continuing daily with one accord **in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house**, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. **And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.**” -Acts 2:46-27*

Like the early church, creating experiences for corporate worship and more personal connections are essential. One is not more important than the other; they are both essential to a healthy growing church.

Notice how in the early church there were not multiple focuses but just one, knowing God and his people.



The Formula of Community

Biblical Community

Being in a deep relationship is essential to becoming a fully devoted disciple. Just consider some of the "one another's" found in Scripture:

- Be devoted to one another. (Romans 12:10)
- Live in harmony with one another. (Romans 12:16)
- Love one another. (Romans 13:8)
- Be at peace with one another. (Mark 9:50)
- Wait for one another when you come together to eat.
(1 Corinthians 11:33)
- Serve one another. (Galatians 5:13)



It's really hard to do these in a corporate worship setting. It's really difficult to "be devoted" to someone else when you're looking at the back of their heads and listening to someone else talk.

The Formula of Community

After years and many attempts, we have found that small groups are the best strategy to build community and disciple believers.

What is a Small Group?

A small group is not a class and does not consist of just one person teaching while others listen.

A “Small Group” is any 4 or more (If less than 4 people, it is not an effective small group) persons getting together on a regular basis (at least biweekly), to do an activity (Study, task, ministry, etc.) in which they interact with each other (fellowship) and have an identifiable leader.



The Formula of Community

4 Benefits of Small Groups for People

1. Small Groups Increase Connectedness.

Significant relationships happen in small groups. Groups move us from rows to circles. People long to be connected, to belong and to know that they are cared for, groups do that better than anything.

2. Small Groups Intensify Discipleship.

While the traditional forms of Sunday School/ Christian Education worked for years and still do for some churches, most churches see more successful discipleship in the context of relationships. Think about it, you cannot hide in small, intimate groups where you can ask questions, share struggles and experience life with others as compared to classroom-style teaching.

Let's walk through an exercise. Name 10 sermons you've heard in your life that shaped you. I doubt you could name ten. Now name 10 people that have invested in your life. It's easier because relationships are much more memorable than ideas.

3. Small Groups Make Growing Churches Feel Personal.

One of the bad raps that large churches carry are that they are impersonal; they fail to meet that desire for intimacy churches-goers desire. Small groups allow the church to become larger and smaller at the same time.

4. Small Groups Provide Care.

The most effective way to receive the care and compassion members need is to belong to a group. Think about it, more gifts are active at the same time to provide the best care.



The Formula of Community

3 Benefits of Small Groups for the Church

1. Small Groups Increase Efficiency.

In order for a Sunday school model to expand it requires an expensive building project. Small groups allow us to use that money in different areas because we have an ever-expanding opportunity for housing off campus groups; there are unlimited meeting times and places. Not to mention there is no need for childcare.

2. Small Groups Empower More People For Ministry.

Often in a Christian Education model only one teacher is needed. It is not uncommon for that teacher to hold the position for many years, prohibiting the empowerment of other leaders. Because we strive to expand the number of groups each semester we can continually add new group leaders. The variety of groups also allows us to empower people with different gift mixes, interests, and experiences.

3. Small Groups Expand The Church.

Your Sunday worship service attendance can have a ceiling placed on it due to the lack of places people can connect. We cannot maintain a crowd without providing a place to connect. If you are facing a growth barrier, you may have a groups issue to address.



The Formula of Community

There are many different small group models.

- Sunday School/ Study Groups
- Sermon Based Groups
- Free-market
- Geographically Based
- Age/Life Stage Groups

The Formula of Community

A Free Market model allows for the greatest amount of involvement and expansion.

Any person who has an idea for a small group, is willing to learn how to lead and can gather at least 4 others to be involved in the group can have a group that semester.



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Characteristics of a Free Market Small Group

- Everyday interests, hobbies, and relationships are the base of the group. (It must be something the leader enjoys doing, that's where their passion will come from) These groups can be anything from a Bible study to biking, baking, or bowling, etc.
- Each group practices Prayer, Activity, & Fellowship in various amounts at each meeting. (These are the three essential and required components for each group no matter the activity.)
- The group meets weekly in a semester format. (This is important because less than weekly creates "acquaintances" not relationships.)
- The leader submits the idea, attends training and recruits members. (Again, it's not your idea but theirs, they have ownership.)
 - Just like in a free market economy, it's survival of the fittest. It is expected that some groups flourish and some fail.



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Benefits of Semesters:

- People prefer a clear start and ending.
- People prefer to make short-term commitments.
- Group promotion and sign-ups are more effective. (Meaning 2-3 times a year, everyone is joining groups, which gives positive peer pressure and church wide momentum.)



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Utilizing Semesters

- Fall - (Launch on late Aug. or early Sept.): 12-14 weeks (5 week break in Dec.-Jan.)
- Spring - (Launch late Jan. or early Feb.) 12-14 weeks
- Optional Summer - Take a break from June to August or offer a limited number of groups for 8-10 weeks.

Many pastors are concerned about having a break in programming. We have found that it refreshes leaders, builds anticipation and excitement for the coming semester and allows us to create more leaders and groups.



The Formula of Community

Small Group Leaders

Building a team of quality small group leaders is essential to success.

Who should be a leader?

Identify growing Christians who are relational, excited about the vision of the church and who want to help people take a step on their journey of faith.

What is required to be a leader?

Complete a Group Leader Application, attend the small group leader training, complete Connect Track, participate in weekly worship, be at least 18 years of age.



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What are the responsibilities of a leader?

- Hosting a small group of people in your home or a predetermined place (restaurant, gym, etc.).
- Extending a genuine greeting and expression of hospitality
- Facilitating the small group activity (task, study, etc.).
- Helping each group member take a step (Prayer, baptism, serving, etc.)
- Reporting to the Small Group Coach. (Coaches are trained leaders of small group leaders. Similar to the Jethro principle that Moses used in governing the nation of Israel.)

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How should leaders be trained?

Initial Small Group Leaders should be trained using a Turbo Group.

6-8 week group lead by the Senior Pastor. Focuses on the nuts and bolts of a group while experiencing group life with others. Covered in an upcoming White Board.

Ongoing training for Small Group Leaders should be monthly and convenient.

Leading a Small Group is a big commitment; we should strive to make ongoing training easy and valuable for our leaders. At TRWC, we offer multiple times on Sundays and Wednesdays to attend the same meeting. This allows people to choose a time that works for them, where childcare is already provided. We also limit our trainings to 50 minutes, in an effort to respect their time and focus only on what is most important.



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One of the most common concerns we encounter is about empowering small group leaders and trusting them not to hurt the local church.

Building trust through training is essential for all small group leaders. Most problems can be traced back to a lack of training and relationship before a group launches.

If the Pastor spends adequate time (turbo group) with potential leaders and has at least one face-to-face conversation before launching a group they will identify any potential issues.



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Small groups cannot be ‘another ministry’ your church offers. Small groups must become the primary way you disciple and must connect directly to the vision.

- Ensure that vision is communicated clearly and frequently.
(“We want every person to Grow in a group...”)
- All leadership should be encouraged to lead groups.
- Assimilate new member with the expectation of being in a small group.
- Align existing ministries that are similar (SS, Men’s & Women’s ministry, classes, etc.) under the banner of small groups.



The Formula of Community

Summary:

- Groups are comprised of no less than 4 people.
- Groups organize around a 'free market' of approved ideas (stage of life, interest or topic of study).
- Groups meet weekly in a home or other location. Homes are preferred.
- Groups include prayer, an activity and fellowship in various amounts.
- Groups typically meet for no more than 2 hours.
- Groups run for approx. 12-14 weeks in a semester format.



The Formula of Community

Small groups have the ability to create church wide momentum because they deepen relationships with God and others.

Of all the things you could tweak in your church's programming nothing would be more impactful than making this your One Focus.





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The Formula of Community

White Board

Six Month Timeline for Launching Small Groups

Ongoing - Vision Cast

- Passing Comments (Make people aware of the need before presenting the solution)
- Leaders & Meetings
- Sermons
- Announcements

August or Month 1 - Decide on your system's regulations & calendar.

Frequency of meeting, Semester length, Free Market or another method, etc.

Note: Change by addition for Sunday School.

What upcoming season is best for launching groups? Not near events so we are not sending people in multiple directions. Think about natural commitment times (Jan. Sept.)



The Formula of Community

White Board

Six Month Timeline for Launching Small Groups

September or Month 2 - Recruit 'early adopters' as the first crop of small group leaders.

Recruitment should not be a public address but personal recruitment.

(Consider how many groups you want to launch with, then recruit enough participants to give each group two couples.)

October or Month 3 - Personally Lead a 6-8 'Turbo Group'.

Utilizing a Turbo Group allows everyone to be taught how to lead a group while experiencing what it is like to be in a group.

This is an important time for you to utilize spiritual discernment as to who you are about to empower.

This will be covered at length in Session 11.



The Formula of Community

White Board

Six Month Timeline for Launching Small Groups

December or Month 5 - Take a break from the Turbo Group and organize the upcoming semester.

- Assist leaders in choosing an activity.
- Print groups guides.
- Most essential quality: Recruitment (group choice, who is in your existing community, invite cards)



The Formula of Community

White Board

Six Month Timeline for Launching Small Groups

January or Month 6 - The whole month will lead to a Launch Day.

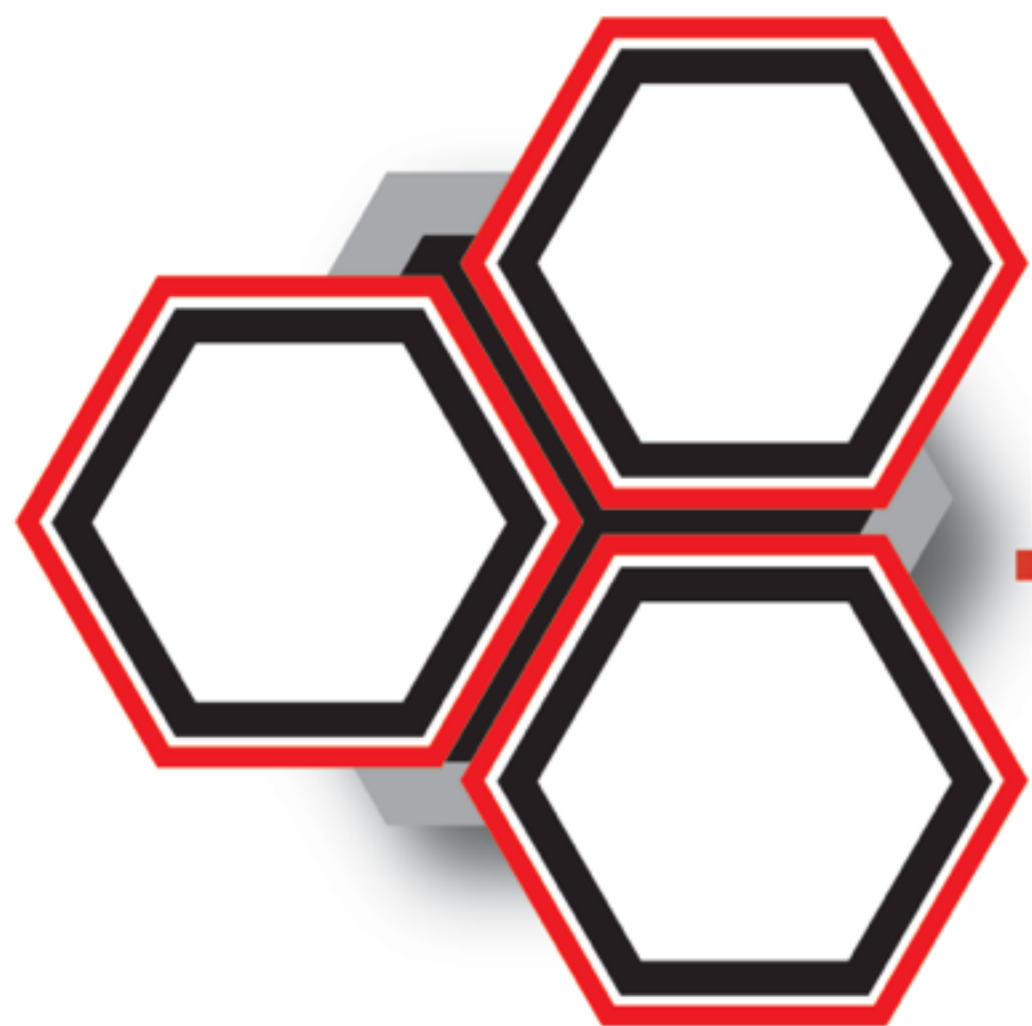
Allow for 4 weeks of promotion. (Announcements, Mailers, Social Media, & Sermons)

Distribute Groups Guides 2 weeks before the launch.

Launch day should include:

- Special decor.
- Every Leader at a designated area.
- Sermon response should be to sign up.



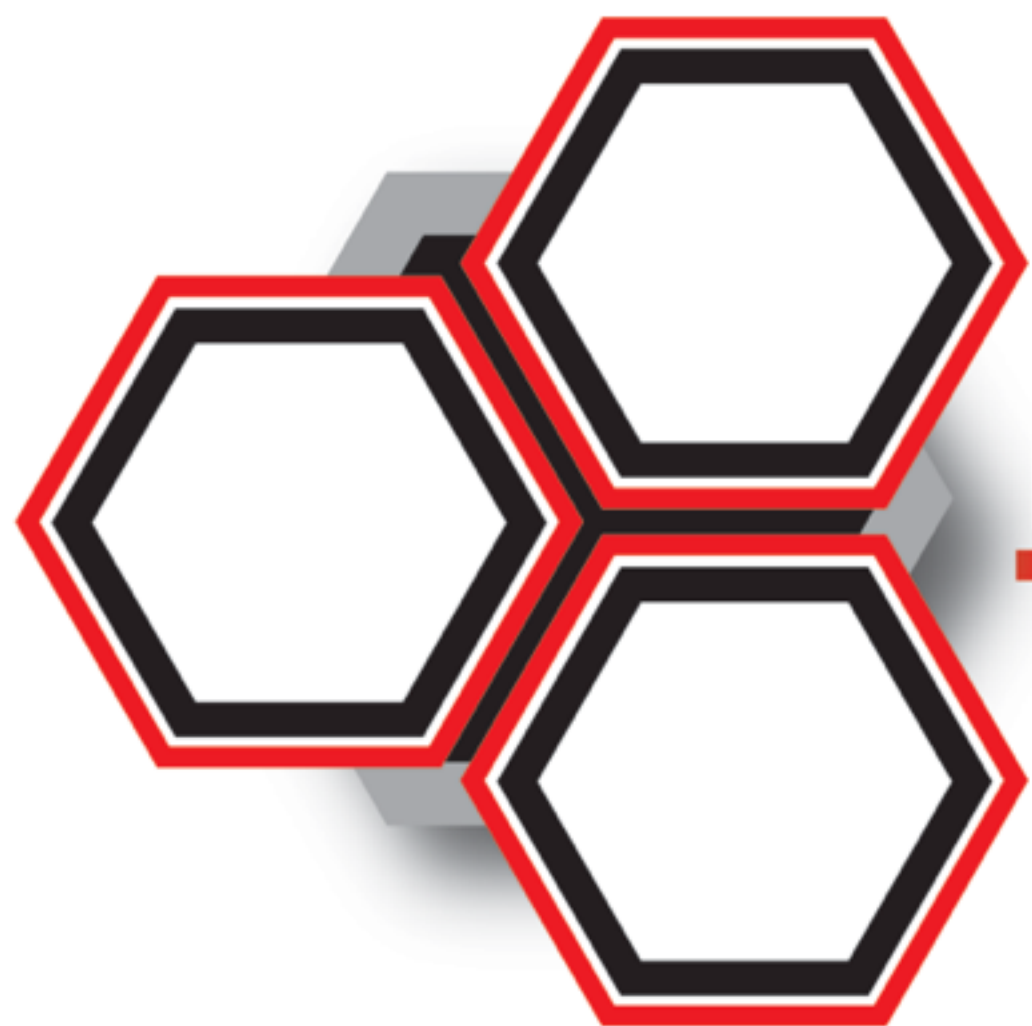


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LEADERS NOTES





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