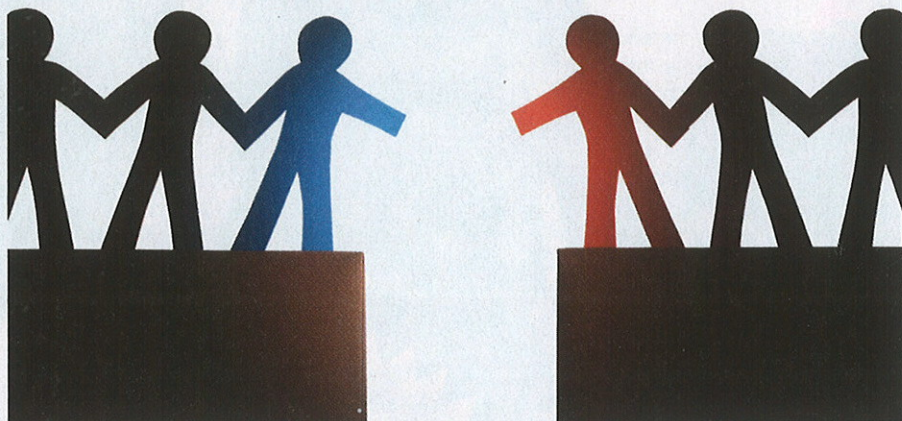


Why Small Groups Boom then Bust



■ For decades an unquestioned canon within the small group movement has been that healthy groups multiply by continually growing and splitting into new groups. Groups that fail to aggressively add new members are written off as uncommitted to the Great Commission. Groups that insist on remaining together get tagged as cliquish.

Except for church leaders professionally responsible for the growth of the church, however, you'll find that hardly anyone thinks splitting is a good idea—especially those who are fortunate enough to find a group that actually develops significant relationships.

Yes, dividing to multiply can (and

often does) work in the short run. But it usually takes only a couple cycles of join/make friends/split before the process loses steam, then stalls out.

That's one reason so many small group ministries built on this pattern go through significant reengineering every three to five years. Real relationships are considered disposable by those organizing the small group ministry. And that undercuts the purpose of the whole thing. A church's purpose for small groups and their people's reasons for attending must match for small groups to work.

I am convinced that the boom-and-bust cycle of small groups could be easily stopped if those who lead small group ministries would simply remember why we started them in the first place and then ruthlessly stick to our original mission: helping people develop authentic and transparent Christian relationships.

—Larry Osborne in *Sticky Church* (Zondervan, 2008)

Text Gen

For the Thumb-Driven Church

■ Twitter® alerts your posse to one thing: what you are doing. This tool combines the ease of cell phone text messaging with the power of email. Now the latest thumb-driven craze can keep your whole congregation connected, says Anthony Coppedge, author of the e-book *The Reason Your Church Must Twitter*. Download it for \$5 at twitterforchurches.com.



I AM MY OWN YODA

71% of U.S. adults develop their own set of religious beliefs rather than accept the teachings of a particular church. That is also the response of 82% of people under age 25 and 61% of born-again adults.

Faith today is more viral than pedagogical, said researcher George Barna. "More people now serve as their own theologian-in-residence." —Barna.org

New Moral Code

Hey, 18-to-25-year-olds, what did you do last week?

64% ... I cussed in public
38% ... I hooked up (illicit sex)
37% ... I lied
33% ... I viewed porn
26% ... I gossiped
12% ... I retaliated

"We are witnessing the development of a new moral code in America," pollster George Barna said. Adults 18-to-25 are three to nine times more likely to engage in these behaviors than Boomers. For example, when asked about their behavior in the last week, only 19% of Boomers admitted to using profanity in public, 4% to having illicit sex, and 6% to lying. "[Young adults] have had little exposure to traditional moral teaching and limited accountability for such behavior," Barna said.

Evangelical adults' most common confessions were profanity (16%) and porn (12%).

—from a survey by Barna.org