

9 Steps for Healthy Small Group Multiplication

By Austin Maxheimer*

I've rarely heard of a small group that desires stagnation. Growth, spiritually and numerically, is always a goal. But how can you ensure this multiplication happens? (By multiplication, I mean the process of adding members to your group with the intention of eventually dividing into new branches of the original group. The original group becomes 2 groups, then 4, then 8....)

Below are a few simple suggestions. These are not the only solutions, but I guarantee if you do these nine things, you'll see the multiplication your group desires.

1. Launch Healthy.

There are lots of ways to get a group underway—multiplying from another group, following the lead of a passionate leader, gathering some friends—but no matter regardless of the impetus, it's critical to launch with a strong core group. You would never plant a church without a core leadership team in place. Similarly, groups should start with a core group of committed people who already have ownership.

Tip: *To lay the foundation for successful multiplication, launch with a core group of at least six.*

2. Talk About Multiplication as if It's a Given.

"What do you mean *if* we multiply? You mean *when*!" Groups that talk about multiplication openly, early, and often are the ones that end up actually doing it. Multiplication doesn't typically happen if it doesn't occur in the first 12 to 18 months. If it doesn't begin with a culture of multiplication, your group will probably never multiply.

Tip: *Devote at least two group sessions to the topic of multiplication and do periodic check-ins.*

3. Make It the Mission.

Your group needs to know that multiplication is part of God's plan for spreading his kingdom. Don't make it primarily about numbers and percentages; make it about the mission of God. Make it your group's mission, with goals and action steps.

Tip: *Bring clarity to multiplication by showing and planning how it contributes to kingdom growth.*

4. Turn Addition Into Multiplication.

To create a relentless culture of addition, your group must be incarnationally invitational—living lives that say "come see Jesus," allowing him to be the magnet that draws people.

Tip: *Three examples of how to consistently bring people into your group:*

- Ask, "Whose group are you in?" Have your group members ask at least one person every Sunday whose group they're in. If they're not in one, invite them to yours. If they are in one, talk about group life. Then open up space to talk about your group's experiences together.
- Think of the people in your life. Then connect how you might actually get them to your group. It could be anything from a simple invitation to going bowling.
- Throw a block party, or any party. Have fun! People like to do fun things.

5. Have Co-Leaders.

Jesus sent out his disciples in pairs. This reflects a practically sound leadership practice. We all bring strengths and weaknesses to leadership. Having two people share responsibilities helps fill in gaps and makes for stronger and complementary leadership. It also eases the burden.

Tip: Be prepared for multiplication by always having two leaders in the group, even if one of them is unofficial.

6. Model Multiplication Through Breakouts.

If you're consistently adding to your group, you could run into some "good problems to have" concerning space and intimacy. Even if yours is a group of six, breakouts are the right move. Breakouts model multiplication, create ownership, reduce the number of voices in discussions, and allow space for relationship building. They also give the leader a unique opportunity to relieve tension and to address issues such as conversation dominators.

Tip: Introduce smaller breakouts times of three to four people regularly into your group time.

7. Celebrate Multiplication Every Time.

Make a big deal out of multiplication, not just when your group multiplies, but when *any* group in your church does. Here are some ways to do that:

- Always throw a launch party. Invite other groups, or take your group to another group.
- Invite leaders to tell the story. Share it with your group.
- Regularly have reunion group gatherings. Pull your family tree together.
- Blast it on social media.

Tip: Add to the buzz of small group multiplication by always celebrating multiplication in your group.

8. Move From the Couch to the Community.

It's been said that the "meat is in the street." Christian community is meant to serve as a witness to Jesus, but how can it function as it's supposed to if no one is seeing it? Get your group [into the community](#) where the power of the Holy Spirit can do amazing things—and add infinite value to your group time.

Tip: Make it a regular habit for your group to go—as a group—where people who are not in your church are.

9. Pray. Pray. Pray.

No movement happens without God. Pray not only for your group, but also for your city, for the renewal of the Gospel, and for *big* things like God using your group to be a catalyst. And, if you really do want to multiply, pray in expectation of that multiplication.

Tip: Get your entire group praying for multiplication—and watch God move.

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