

THE

MINISTRY

MATTERS

SERIES

DAVE EARLEY

THE

*The Four  
Secrets  
of  
Multiplying  
Groups*

*Dave Earley*

# **THE FOUR SECRETS OF MULTIPLYING GROUPS**

**By Dave Earley**

## Chapter 1

# VISION: Catch the Vision of Multiplying Leaders

If you met Scott, you would not be aware of the impact he has had, is having and will have on the kingdom of God. The first time we met, he introduced himself to me as “just a pizza shop guy.” We spent time together, and after seeing his potential I encouraged him to become a small group leader. He agreed, went through our training process, and became a hard working leader with a growing small group.

Then Scott caught the dream of multiplication. Within a few months, he trained Mark to lead a group and helped him start a group of his own. Then he trained Dale to lead and, just like Mark, helped him start another group. Next, he trained Steve and ... you get the picture. In ten years, Scott trained four small group leaders out of his group! In addition, another young man he mentored went on to plant a new church.

Scott has made quite a kingdom impact for “just a pizza shop guy.” It all began when he caught the vision of making a difference by multiplying leaders.

### **A big vision makes a big difference**

In 1987, Cesar Fajardo had a small ministry with just thirty young people in his youth group. However, Fajardo had a big dream. He took a photograph of the nearby indoor soccer stadium and hung the picture on the wall of his room. He began to dream and believe that God would one day fill it with young people. By the year 1999, there were 18,000 young people lined up on Saturday nights to get inside that stadium for his youth worship service.

Within twelve years, Cesar raised up a family of 8,000 youth small group leaders for his church in Bogotá, Colombia. His success began with a dream. His dream spurred him to pour his life into developing 12 multiplying group leaders, who in turn have each raised up twelve multiplying group leaders, and so on. He states, “The vision must take hold of your life, and you must be able to transmit that vision.”<sup>1</sup>

Fajardo's success has eight simple, discernible elements:

- He saw it. His vision was so vivid he could take a picture of it.
- He saw it big. He saw an 18,000-seat auditorium filled with students seeking God.
- He saw it through the eyes of faith. He only had 30 kids in 1987, yet by faith he believed God would one day multiply 30 into a stadium full of young people.

- He saw himself in the picture. He believed God could use him to make it happen.
- He started where he was. He trained the 12 he had in order to get the 18,000 he did not yet have.
- He diligently poured his life into raising up others to lead. The focus of his time, energy, and effort for the next dozen years was training his twelve to multiply more “multipliers.”
- He kept focused on the vision over a long period of time. He stayed with it for twelve years until the dream became a reality.
- God brought great results. The stadium was full on Saturday nights.

### **With God All things are Possible**

You probably aren't ready to envision 8,000 small group leaders today. But if you are an effective small group leader, there is no reason you should not be envisioning cooperating with God in raising at least one healthy, growing, effective multiplying spiritual leader a year. You can do it if you catch a dream from the Lord. Many small group leaders already possess a vision of multiplying their servant heart into others, and this is just one step further.

But it is not enough to have a vision. The vision only becomes a reality when you follow through on your part and begin to pour your life into potential leaders.

### **A Vision for Multiplication**

A vision to multiply your leadership abilities will give you passion and purpose as a small group leader. It will also help you to keep growing and learning as you raise up others to minister to your small group members. And last, a vision to multiply leadership will leave a long legacy of leaders well after you have died and gone home to be with our Lord! Ask the Lord for His vision for your life as a multiplying leader and he will begin to birth that vision within you.

### **Action Points:**

1. What is your vision for your ministry as a small group leader? Write it below. ? Does It include multiplication?
2. If you don't have a clear vision for your ministry, write out a prayer asking God for a new and powerful vision for your future to develop others as leaders.
3. Who can you tell about your vision? Your spouse? Your pastor or coach? Your group? Talking about it will help you refine and reinforce it.

Notes:

1. Joel Comiskey, *Groups of 12*, (Houston, TX: TOUCH Publications, 1999), p. 37.

[Parts of this chapter, adapted from chapter one of Dave Earley's, *Turning Members into Leaders*, (Houston, TX: TOUCH Publications, 2003).]

## Chapter 2

# DISCOVERY: The Key to Discovering Potential Leaders

### Important Questions

- “How do I find someone to disciple?”
- “Where will I find a potential apprentice?”
- “Where will I find the people into which I am to multiply my life?”

Small group leaders often start asking these questions once they catch the vision of multiplying themselves by multiplying group leaders. Jesus is our example in all things, including selecting potential leaders. Note that he practiced the principle of discovering leaders through prayer:

*“One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles.” (Lk. 6:12-13)*

Jesus not only practiced the principle of discovering leaders through prayer, He told us to do the same. Note what He told His disciples, as recorded by Matthew:

*Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.” (Mt. 9: 37-38)*

In my second year of college, I was excited about spiritual reproduction. I wanted to reproduce, but I had no disciples. So I began to make it an important part of my prayer life. Every day I prayed, “Lord, give me a disciple.”

Exactly two weeks later, a fellow student approached me about discipling him. The only time we were both able to meet in our dorm was late at night. The only place available was in an open area in the bathroom/shower area of our dorm. So we met every night, calling ourselves the “Bathroom Baptist Temple.”

Discipling this guy was so fulfilling I asked God for another disciple. Exactly two weeks later, a guy approached us and said, “Every night for the last two weeks I have listened

to you two guys while brushing my teeth. I would love to get in on what you are doing. Can I join?" So the Bathroom Baptist Temple expanded from two to three.

It was so much fun, I asked for yet another disciple and prayed each day about it. Exactly two weeks later another guy approached us. He was the roommate of the second guy. He said, "I don't know what you guys are doing every night, but my roommate is a different person. How do I join the Bathroom Baptist Temple?" So the B.B.T. went from three to four.

We were having such a good time I asked for yet *another* disciple during my prayer time. You guessed it! Exactly two weeks later, we added our fifth member. He also had seen what we were doing and wanted to be a part. At this point, we outgrew the bathroom and the dorm supervisor gave us an empty dorm room in which to meet. By the end of the semester, it was full of guys meeting several nights a week for Scripture memory, Bible study, accountability, and prayer.

This was one of the best times of my life. I had the opportunity to pour my life into other young men. We developed good friendships. All of us grew from the accountability offered in the group. Each guy said the group changed his life. The next semester our group multiplied into five groups, with each of the original members as a new leader. Through this amazing experience, I learned that the key for discovering potential leaders was persistent prayer.

God is always looking for potential leaders. Multiplying leaders is cooperating with God in *His* plan to find and mentor potential leaders into multiplying leaders. It's all about getting in on what God is already doing, and working with God in discovering potential leaders. Therefore, prayer is of the utmost importance.

**Action Points:**

1. Every day, ask God to send you someone to disciple and train to lead a small group.
2. Once you have an apprentice, ask God to send the apprentice someone he or she can train.
3. Pray about this together until your apprentice has an apprentice.

[Parts of this chapter, adapted from chapter one of Dave Earley's *Turning Members into Leaders*, (Houston, TX: Touch Publications, 2003).]

## Chapter 3

# Four Steps for Developing New Leaders

Kent leads a small group at our daughter church. In less than a year his group has already successfully multiplied. In an e-mail I just received from him, he said that his “small’ group wasn’t small anymore ... they had 30 in group the night before. Then he wrote, “I guess it’s time to multiply again!”

Wow! What an exciting challenge it is to lead a healthy, growing group. But the real challenge is to fully develop the potential leaders for new groups in order to successfully multiply. Group multiplication will never happen without developing potential leaders. I like what Joel Comiskey wrote: “The principle job of the cell leader is to train the next cell leader — not just fill the house with guests.”<sup>1</sup>

I have spent the last 30 years on a quest to learn how to mentor and multiply effective leaders. I started by studying the disciple-making ministry of Jesus. I then studied the multiplying ministry of Barnabas into the life of Paul. I also read everything I could find on disciple-making, leadership development, and small group ministry. I attended many seminars and listened to more tapes than I can count. I talked with effective pastors and Christian leaders. And, like a mad scientist, I experimented with what I learned to see how it worked.

I have come to see the steps, principles, and practices Jesus used for developing effective leaders reinforced again and again in my ministry experience. I have taught these four steps for developing leaders to hundreds of pastors, Christian leaders, missionaries, and small group leaders. Here they are for you to learn and adopt.

### **STEP ONE: Model it**

Ask potential leaders to watch as you do the ministry, just as Jesus did with His disciples (Mt. 9:32-38). Let them see a highly effective small group leader in action. When Paul and Barnabas were sent out to minister, Barnabas was the leader. Barnabas was *doing* the ministry and Paul was *observing*. Note how they are listed as “Barnabas and Paul” (Acts 13:1-5).

## **STOP TWO: Mentor it**

Ask them do a task as you watch, assist, gently correct, and encourage as Jesus did with his disciples (Mt. 10:1). Not long into their journey, Barnabas moved over to give Paul the opportunity to lead. Note that they now were listed as “Paul and Barnabas” (Acts 13:6ff).

## **STEP THREE: Motivate it**

Let them do the task as you encourage from a distance, as Jesus did when he sent his disciples out two by two without him (Mt. 10:5). Similarly, when Paul and Barnabas prepared for another missionary journey, Paul was ready to go on his own (Acts 15:36-41).

## **STEP FOUR: Multiply it**

The original disciples multiplied out to a total of 70 (Lk. 10:1), then perhaps 500 (1 Cor. 15:6). After Jesus ascended to heaven, the number of disciples multiplied to 3,000 (Acts 2:41), then 5,000 men (Acts 4:4). Then there were so many that the Bible simply says the number \_\_\_\_\_ was \_\_\_\_\_ multiplied (Acts 6:7).

In like fashion, Paul was soon ministering without the help of Barnabas and beginning to take others, including Silas and Timothy, through the process (Acts 15:39-41; 16:1-3). In Acts 17:14, we read where Paul left Timothy and Silas to minister in Berea on their own.

### **Putting the Four Steps Together**

Here is an example of how this process works for training someone to facilitate a small group meeting: Betty asks Debbie to be her apprentice. They agree to meet the night before the group each week to pray and prepare for the meeting.

1. *Model it.* Month one, Betty does all the preparation and leading, while Debbie watches. Betty is careful to explain what, why, and how she is doing things along the way.
2. *Mentor it.* Month two, Debbie prepares the icebreaker. She practices it in front of Betty. Betty makes some encouraging and helpful comments. Then Debbie leads the icebreaker in the group. Betty gives her more encouragement and helpful feedback when they get together in their weekly meeting.
3. *Motivate it.* Month three, Debbie leads the icebreaker all by herself. Occasionally, Debbie is given helpful feedback and far more encouragement.
4. *Multiply it.* Month four, Debbie shares the icebreaker with confidence and skill.

If Betty is smart, she will do basically the same thing with each piece of the meeting until Debbie can do each element confidently.

Jesus gave us a simple, yet powerful way to train and release new leaders with this four step process. I've used it many times successfully. If you will embrace it you too will produce confident and competent leaders for new small groups.

**Action Points:**

1. Consider the four parts of the process and the potential leaders in your group. Which parts have you done with them and what's the next step?
2. Share this with your coach or pastor and put it into action.
3. Pray daily for your future leaders, asking God to give them confidence to lead and grow, seeing themselves as leaders.

*Notes:*

1. Joel Comiskey, *Leadership Explosion*, (Houston TX: TOUCH Publications, 2000), p. 40.

[This article is adapted from chapter six of the book, *Eight Habits of Effective Small Group Leaders* by Dave Earley, (Houston TX: TOUCH Publications: 2001).]

## Chapter 4

# Three Ways to Birth a New Group

As a pastor, I was regularly asked to visit people in the hospital. Some visits were far more fun than others, such as the visits to the labor and delivery ward. The happiest place in any hospital is where the new fathers, aunts, uncles, and grandparents have their noses pressed against the big glass window looking proudly at the new baby!

In a similar fashion, there is nothing better for a leader than seeing one's group give birth. While there are several ineffective ways to birth new groups, there is no single "right way" to birth a group.

Any form or combination of the three basic methods below will be highly effective.

### **1. Multiply: Two groups of equal size multiply from parent group**

The vision of multiplication is shared. A new leader and/or leadership team develops. Relationships are formed so the team is strong. Group members are then given the option of staying with the original leaders or being a part of the new group. (Visit with each member in private to talk this through.) The goal in this multiplication strategy is to have an equal amount of members committed to each group.

### **2. Launch: A core group from parent group launches a new group**

As in the first option, the vision of multiplication is shared. A new leadership team develops and relationships are formed. Group members are given the option of staying with the original leaders or being a part of the new group. However, having equal halves is not necessarily the goal. The new leaders understand that the new group will be launched without many members from the parent group.

### **3. Plant: One person from the parent group plants a new group**

The planter can be either the original leader or a new leader. He or she launches a new group with new members in the church, people from the community, members of other groups who want to start a new group, or a combination of all of the above.

## **Additional Suggestions for a Successful Multiplication**

### **Talk about multiplying early and often.**

Start talking about new groups forming from day one. Describe the fact that one of the purposes of the group is to raise up leaders who will be sent out to lead new groups. At least monthly, take time to pray during your meeting about the new groups. Keep your group informed of the plans and progress each step along the way and it will be far easier when multiplication time arrives. Remember, “people are down on what they are not up on.”

### **Talk about multiplying your group in positive terms.**

Do not speak of “breaking up,” “splitting,” or “dividing” your group. This just sounds like divorce. Instead, talk about “birthing” new groups, “launching” new groups, “multiplying” groups, and “raising up and releasing” new leaders. Words are powerful.

### **Talk about multiplying in terms of the big picture.**

Every new group formed lowers the number of unchurched people on the planet. New small groups equals reaching our world for Christ. Share this “big picture” view often.

### **Pray about the best method and the best time to multiply.**

It is possible to make the right decision at the wrong time. Maybe the group is ready to multiply, but the new leader(s) are not. Or maybe the new leader(s) are ready, but the group is not. Or maybe it is a poor season to launch (Summer is usually not a good season to launch). Pray about the best timing for your multiplication with your group and your coach or pastor.

### **Set a date for multiplication.**

Setting a date for multiplying your group is essential in achieving the dream of multiplying your group according to Joel Comiskey’s survey of 700 multiplying small group leaders from around the world:

*“Cell leaders who know their goal — when their groups will give birth — consistently multiply their groups more often than leaders who don’t know. In fact, if a cell leader fails to set goals the cell members can clearly remember, he has about a 50-50 chance of multiplying his cell. But if the leader sets goals, the chance of multiplying increases to three of four.”<sup>1</sup>*

### **Celebrate the new birth.**

When your small group is ready to give birth, throw a party and invite your friends and your coach. Ask your small groups pastor to preside over a special time of prayer, sending out the new group(s) and leader(s). This is a great opportunity to recast the vision for multiplying. Some churches make this a part of their worship celebration to make a visual statement of their priorities and vision. (If your church doesn't do this today, ask your pastor if your group's multiplication could be celebrated by praying over the new group during an upcoming worship service.)

There are many ways to multiply a group when you consider the combinations of the three ways described in this chapter. The goal of multiplication is to insure the new group and the existing groups remain strong with healthy members and competent leaders. Bathe your multiplication in prayer, talk through everything with the members and leaders involved, and move forward in confidence. God is on your side when you multiply leaders and groups!

### **Action Points:**

1. Review the three basic multiplication strategies and discuss each one with your apprentice.
2. Ask him or her which one provides the greatest level of excitement.
3. Then, pray together and ask God to work it all out and give you both wisdom as to how to proceed and when to multiply your group.

### **For more information on this subject see:**

- ***Turning Members into Leaders***
- ***Disciple Making Is...***
- ***Eight Habits of Effective Small Group Leaders***

#### *Notes:*

1. Joel Comiskey, *Home Group Cell Explosion*, (Houston, TX, TOUCH Publications, 1998), p. 47.