

# Revitalizing Sunday School

## Part 1: Re-Envisioning Sunday School

### Participant's Handout

#### Purpose:

To expand the understanding of how the church can effectively use various group sizes to meet social needs

#### Objectives :

- Identify the need for various group sizes.
- Discuss four group sizes and how they meet social needs.
- Evaluate the local church's effectiveness in meeting social needs when focusing on spiritual development.
- Develop a plan for deliberately meeting social needs.

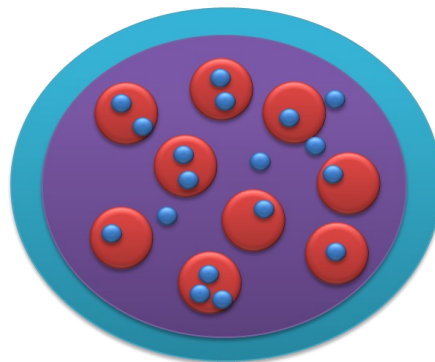
#### I. Introduction

- A. The church is a \_\_\_\_\_ institution formed by Christ to minister spiritually. We normally consider the spiritual aspect and overlook the sociological aspect.
- B. During our discussion today, we will talk about four group sizes that meet our social needs.
- C. Just because a church is small doesn't mean it doesn't need small groups.
  1. People like to serve the Lord \_\_\_\_\_ and small groups provide the intimate and personal fellowship they desire.
  2. So as we look at numbers and sizes of groups, continually think about how you can organize your church to meet the needs addressed within each group.

#### II. FOUR SOCIAL GROUPS

- A. Discuss needs, relationships, typical structure, and place of meeting.
  1. Cell
  2. Class
  3. Congregation
  4. Celebration

- B. Illustration



## A PERSPECTIVE ON CHRISTIAN LIFE

### Human Needs and Church Size

	Cell	Class	Congregation	Celebration
Group Size				
Needs	Intimate sharing	Learn, Fun, fellowship	Learn	Praise, Worship, Prayer
Relationships	Close, Deep, Strong	Everyone knows my name, I'm missed when I'm absent	Sense of belonging, Association Spectator	Participant, Worshiper
Typical Structure	Home prayer groups, Study groups	Sunday School Class, Interest Group	Sunday morning service	Any service with anticipation
Place of Meeting	Homes	Sunday School classroom, Anywhere the group dictates	Fellowship Hall, restaurant, meeting room or club house	Sanctuary

### III. Why Churches Don't Grow Beyond 40

Adapted from "The Rule of Forty," Lyle E. Schaller, the Christian Century Foundation, 1983.

#### A. Dynamics of Group Size

1. The church is a \_\_\_\_\_ organization.
2. People attach themselves to a voluntary organization because of relationships.
  - a. Forty people in a group \_\_\_\_\_ the quality of relationships.
  - b. Most youth groups, men's fellowships, and women's organizations rarely exceed 40.

#### B. The Small Group (3-15)

1. Small groups (cells) are the most effective in terms of in-depth relationships and productivity in tasks.
2. Larger groups (classes) can provide the same function, but with diminishing returns.

- a. Most youth groups, prayer fellowships, church boards, choirs, or mission societies have 15 or fewer members.
- b. \_\_\_\_\_ people are about the most any of us can keep track of.
- c. When the group exceeds 15, someone can be absent and go \_\_\_\_\_.
- d. Most people will not feel comfortable \_\_\_\_\_ to discussion when there are more than 15 people present.

### C. The Large Group (40+)

- 1. When a group gets close to 40, relationships with people cease to be the reason to get together.
  - a. The sense of cohesion or unity is lost because everyone does not know each other.
  - b. With a group this size not everyone can be \_\_\_\_\_ to develop a strong attachment to the group or to each other.
- 2. Discussion and presentation styles must \_\_\_\_\_ when the group nears forty.
  - a. Involving the participants in interactive discussion where everyone feels comfortable to \_\_\_\_\_ is virtually impossible.
  - b. Small group interactions are even difficult to facilitate with significantly positive results.

### D. Evidences of the 40 Barrier

Forty is a barrier to continued growth when:

- a. Absenteeism or irregular attendance \_\_\_\_\_;
- b. Small group principles cease to be \_\_\_\_\_;
- c. People become discontent and \_\_\_\_\_;
- d. Morale \_\_\_\_\_

### E. Breaking the 40 Barrier

- 1. When your church, Sunday school class, choir, or other groups reach 40, implement the following techniques to continue their growth:
  - a. Develop multiple \_\_\_\_\_ groups, i.e. in a Sunday School class, discussion groups or prayer cells can be encouraged inside or outside the class.

- b. Move away from small group \_\_\_\_\_.
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_ large group techniques, for example, become platform centered.
  - d. Turn the group's attention to a leader or a task and away from \_\_\_\_\_.
- 2. While the group is transitioning through the 40 barrier, ask for a high \_\_\_\_\_ from each person until the changes are complete.
  - 3. Do advanced \_\_\_\_\_, for this is more helpful when holding large groups together.

### **Small Group Exercise**

Identify what groups are currently in place to meet the four different needs outlined in the lecture (cell, class, congregation, and celebration).

Also at what level are they meeting the need for celebration?

List the groups your church currently has in place to meet the needs identified by the four groups.

#### **Cell**

Need - intimate sharing

#### **Class**

Need - learn, fun fellowship

#### **Congregation**

Need - learn, feel a sense of belonging, association

#### **Celebration**

Need - praise, worship, prayer

50% - 55% capacity

If time permits, discuss ideas for enhancing or implementing groups.

## Action Planning/Reporting

Identify areas where your church can implement or enhance groups so they are meeting multiple needs. Identify with whom you need to share this information.

Idea and Actions Required to Im- plement	Who is responsi- ble?	When will it hap- pen?	What was effec- tive?	What would you change?
1.				
2.				
3.				

Identify who you need to share this information with and develop a strategy for sharing the information.

Method	How	Who	When	Results