

Cell Group Growth & Development

“If the love of God means anything, it means there is always room for one more.” Robert (Bob) Orr

A. Growth and Reproduction.

1. What makes a cell group successful?

- It's not just having a good leader.
- It's not just about good worship.
- It's more than the study of God's word.
- It's more than warm friendships.
- It's more than completing a 'Cell Leader Training Course'

Successful cell groups are about having God's heart for people.

God is passionate about people. He wants people to know him, touch him, trust him and grow to become all he dreams them of being.


In *Genesis* God set in motion the principle of growth and reproduction.

'Healthy things grow and reproduce.'

If living things do not grow and reproduce we assume something is wrong. We consult a doctor so the problem can be diagnosed and hopefully fixed.

The same principle of reproduction applies to cell groups.

KEY

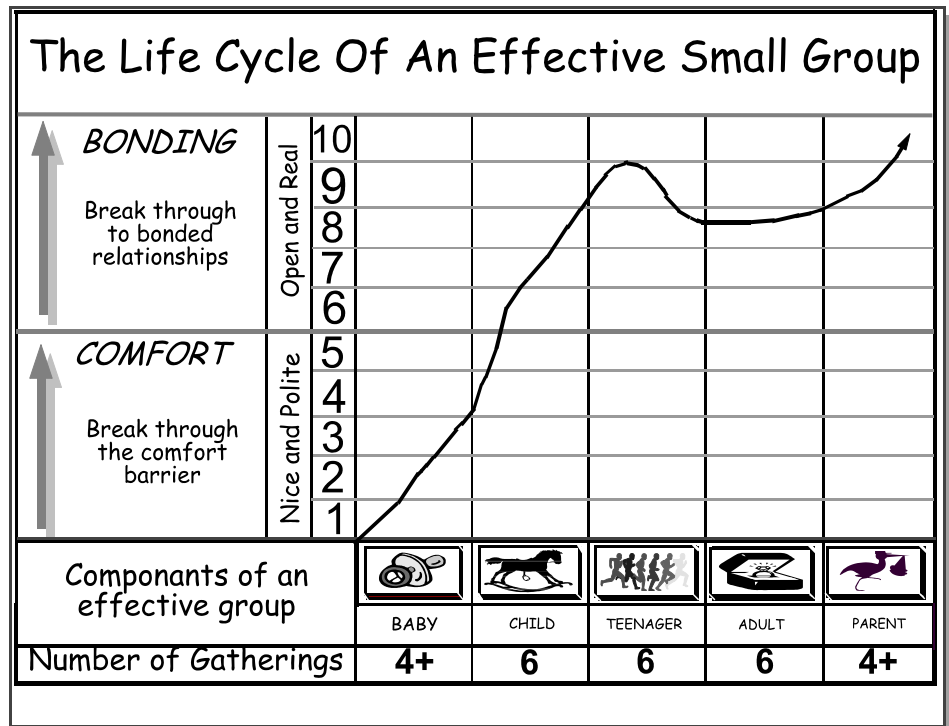
 Experience yourself

✓ Important note

☺ Illustration

As we understand why Cells grow and what a healthy Cell looks like, we can be more effective in multiplying Cells that are full of LIFE

B. The Life Cycle of a Cell Group



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(The graph shows developing relationship, openness and maturity.)

The life cycle of healthy cell group has five stages.

A healthy Cell will grow through each stage.

Understanding the life cycle will help you to diagnose problems a Cell may be facing. You will also be able to help a Cell that has become stuck on one stage.

A healthy Cell will reproduce (*birth*) a new Cell within six to eight months.

C. Stages in the Life Cycle of a Cell

1. **BABY** (Approx 4-6 weeks)



The Cell is brand new and has probably just birthed from a mother Cell. In a new Cell it takes 4-6 gatherings before the Cell begins to feel like a Cell.

New Cells often hold 'reach out events' to attract new members. *(Hint: When inviting people who are not in Cell member's circles of relationship, expect about half of those who said they may come to actually turn up.)*



Questions they will ask themselves about your Cell.

- Do I like the other people here? Do I feel welcome?
- Is this a safe place? Could I trust the others enough to share my life with them?
- What kind of commitments will the Cell ask me to make?
- Will the Cell meet my personal needs? Will the Cell add value to my life? Can I grow here?

At Victory we get a lot of visitors to our cell groups via the Sunday services. We allow new people the freedom to visit Cells so they can find one that they can feel part of.

2. CHILD.
(4-6 Weeks)



At the child stage Cell members focus on themselves more than others in the Cell. (*Children tend to focus most of their attention on themselves ie my toy, How I feel, what I want.*)

As people start to feel comfortable in the Cell, their mask of politeness begins to be relaxed. Cell members will start to express how they really feel. Personality conflicts and irritations will begin to emerge.

Cell leaders will focus the next 4-6 weeks on building relationship and trust within the Cell.

Don't be afraid of conflict, it is a sign that you are on the right track

Conflict that is worked through in a healthy way always produces better relationship

This is a good time to raise the Cell's vision for birthing and outreach.

While personality conflicts within the Cell are not 'fun', they are a normal part of life. I have been in many Cells where a couple of people in the Cell clashed at first. Look for an opportunity to challenge any emerging wrong attitude and encourage mutual apology (and forgiveness). Appropriate apology (and forgiveness) can bring this relationship to a new level of respect and friendship.

Those that once clashed can become best friends in the Cell.

3. TEENAGE.
(Approx 6 weeks)



In a healthy Cell the members work through normal conflicts. Trust and caring relationship begins to develop in the Cell.

The Cell focus moves from self to others, teenagers love to belong. Members who are new to Cell life will discover levels of relationship and care that they may never have had before.

Many Cell members begin to experience friendship, trust and safety for the first time in their lives. Members become free to be themselves and talk openly.

This is a dangerous stage in Cell life. Many people are experiencing love and trust for the first time. Sometimes they can be afraid of losing their new found intimacy and discourage others from joining the Cell.

This is the easiest stage at which to get stuck.

Tragically a Cell that will not grow past the teenage stage will become inwardly focused and eventually lose the very relationships they are trying to keep.

Leaders must lead their Cell to develop an outward focus. If the Cell will reach out, members can experience more friendships than they have ever known.



4. ADULT.
(Approx 6+ weeks)



Normal adults are mature enough to make choices that are in the best interest of others. Commitment and giving to others is a normal, healthy adult response.

A Cell at the adult stage has begun to develop an outward focus. Cell members want to share what they have with others.

As the Cell reaches out to their circles of relationship, new people are added to the Cell.

Planning and experiencing 'Reach out Events' are an exciting, challenging and fun part of the adult stage of Cell life.

The graph of *'The life cycle of an effective cell'* shows that there will be some drop in depth of bonding at this stage. New people coming to the Cell will affect the level of personal sharing for a while, but the investment will pay off in the long term for everyone.

5. PARENT.
(Approx 6-8 weeks)



The Cell at the adult stage has created an environment where new individuals are welcomed into Cell life.

New people have been added and the Cell now moves into the parent stage.

The parent stage is the active preparation for the arrival of a new Cell. This stage includes prayer, planning and preparation for a new Cell to form out of the mother Cell (*birth*).

Time to focus on the new birth

The apprentice takes over all aspects of leading the Cell life to enable the leader to finalize preparations (*new apprentices and venues*) for the Cell birth.

New Cells must have a leader, apprentice and host/ess before they commence.

We will look further at the dynamics of birthing in Chapter 10.

Experience for yourself

Close your eyes and let images come to your mind as I say these words...

Split

Birth

What kind of impressions did you have? Is there a sense of emotion attached to any of your pictures? Positive or Negative?

Naming the process of creating new Cells is very important; avoid negative associations with a church's previous small Cell experience.



D. UNHEALTHY CELL GROUPS

Unhealthy cell groups are generally stuck on one developmental stage and fail to mature and grow towards birthing a new Cell.

1. Stuck at the New Birth Stage.

"I wear a nice mask"

Everyone is nice and polite. Little room is available for people to get past a nice 'meeting' and talk about personal application.

2. Stuck at the Childhood Stage

"What's in it for me?"

Each member comes to the Cell with the intention of taking from the group what they need. There is little concept of serving the needs of others.

3. Stuck at the Teenage Stage

"Us four and no more!"

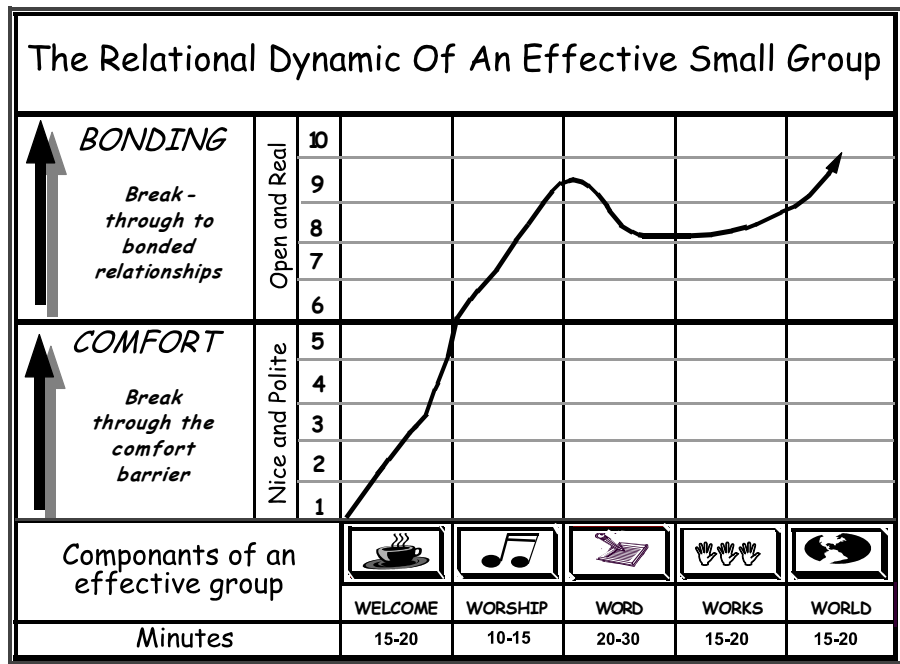
Members do not want to risk losing close relationships by including others in the Cell. They want to focus on study and activity that draws the existing Cell closer together.

Unfortunately it is a spiritual principle that the thing you grasp too tightly is the very thing you will lose. This Cell will probably die.

Proverbs 11:24 24 One man gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty.

E. Essential Stages of a Successful Cell Gathering

The weekly cell group gathering also has five separate stages. The Relational Dynamic Graph shows the importance of each of the five stages of an effective cell group gathering.



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Each of these stages is an important tool in building relationships within the Cell and ministering to real needs.

1. Welcome



Person to person (20-30 minutes)

Our gathering starts with coffee and informal chat. The leader brings the focus of the Cell together with a simple icebreaker activity or question.

It is important that each cell gathering begins with the WELCOME stage. Please don't be tempted to alter this.

2. Worship



Person to God (12-15 minutes)

Simple worship that focuses on expressing love and thankfulness to God. CD or creative worship.

The WORSHIP stage is a top priority in cell life. The only time I may skip the Worship stage of a cell gathering is when having a 'Social Reach Out' event where worship is not appropriate, or on the rare occasion when the normal agenda of a cell gathering is put aside to minister to a crisis need.

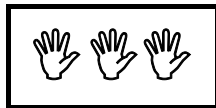
3. Word



God to person (25-30 minutes max)

We look at the God's Word together, helping each person to apply its principles and values to their life.

4. Works



Person to person inside the Cell. (15-20 minutes)
(John 9:4 Doing the work of him who sent me...)

Ministry to the personal concerns and needs of cell members and issues raised by discussion and application of God's Word.

5. World



Person to person outside the Cell. (10-15 minutes)

Prayer for the unchurched. Planning 'Reaching out Events' and the Cell birth.

The stages of WORD, WORKS and WORLD can be interchangeable.

I have found that the 'World stage' can sometimes be neglected by Christians. This seems to occur in cells where older Christians are still transitioning to a cell lifestyle. One way of overcoming this neglect of the World stage is pray for the lost directly after Worship.

A cell leader who consistently spends too much time on the Word stage is robbing the other equally important stages of a healthy cell gathering. This cell leader is almost always neglecting the Works stage (ministry to each member) and the World stage (heart felt prayer for the lost).

In these Cells it can be a benefit to cell group life to place the Word stage last.

F. A HEALTHY CELL GROWS TOMORROWS LEADERS

In a healthy cell group it is expected that a **Seeker** will become a **Growing Christian**. When ready the growing Christian can become an **Apprentice** and later a **Cell Group Leader**. Cell Group leaders who successfully birth new Cells may begin to **Coach** and share their experience with others. Successful Coaches may become **Cell Pastors** who will coordinate cell groups within a geographic or homogeneous district.