

MULTIPLICATION VALUES SMALL GROUP STUDY GUIDE

#1 PASSION FOR PEOPLE: Moving past playing church.

Introduction:

God designed the church to multiply. The only explanation for the size of the Christian movement worldwide is the fact that churches have planted churches which have gone on to plant more churches! It's a principle that can be traced back to the earliest days of the church (Read II Timothy 2:2!). It is important to note however that beneath the activity of church planting are deep biblical values that breathe life into the church planting movement worldwide. Those values are the subject of this small group study and the foundation for a missional church planting effort.

About 82% of north Americans are not actively connected to a local church. That reality directs us to church planting because church plants are the most effective strategy whereby new people are reached with the good news of Jesus. Churches under 10 years of age tend to see 10 new believers for every 100 attendees annually while churches over 10 years of age see about 3 new believers for every 100 attendees annually. The ratios are striking. It usually takes new ministries to reach new people!

Facts and figures however don't tell the whole story. Those numbers signal that a great many people do not know about the love of God in Jesus Christ. Being "lost" and having a deep concern for those not "found" by the grace of God is the biblical concept that this study is designed to explore. It is our hope that in studying God's passion for those far from himself we too will develop a deep care for those so loved by God. Church multiplication (churches planting churches) is more than mechanics...it is heart and soul!

Churches that plant churches are more than production agencies. They are communities of believers who care deeply for people who are far from Christ. It's about you and me...knowing the names of our neighbors and colleagues who are not believers. It is about doing our part in God's great search for people and their search for him!

Read Scripture: Luke 15:1-10

Discussion Questions:

Warm up...

On your street, what percentage of people do you think are active in a faith community each weekend? How many of the people who are not church members do you feel you know as friends?

Review the "Case for Church Planting" at www.m-moves.com What impresses you?

Dig in...

1. In each of the “lost and found” stories Jesus told, how would you say he is describing God? What are the words Jesus uses to describe the passion God has for people?
2. In each of the stories Jesus also speaks of the search God makes for people dear to him. How do the stories give insight into God’s search? How do they give us insight into how we might join God in his search?

Read Scripture: Luke 15:10-32

3. How does this story add to our understanding of God’s passion for people and his earnest search for us? What does the extravagance of the father for his lost son suggest about where our resources should be directed in ministry?
4. In verse 28-32 Jesus describes the way those who have been faithful can be offended by the passion of God for those who are far off. What is Jesus saying about human nature and about God? How does this describe our situation?

Wrap Up:

As your church explores birthing a new congregation what do these stories from Jesus tell us about the core motivation God has in this effort? To what degree is your motivation on track with God’s?

What simple steps might you take to cultivate a passion for those God loves? How does this teaching from Jesus help you see the purpose of the church with new clarity?

In what ways can you join the search for those God loves dearly through a church plant and in your personal life? Who do you know that you would hope could be reached in a new church?

Prayer:

Church planting is about reaching new people. Pray for a passion in your church for that core value. Pray for a love for those who are lost and far from Christ.

Pray for your own personal encounters with those who are not believers. Pray for people by name in your life....your neighbors, friends, associates.

Pray for a love for what God loves in your congregation. Pray for the heart of God for people. Confess lack of concern and for personal and corporate obedience as needed.

Ben Ingebretson, *Multiplication Moves 2012*