



MentorNet #70

**“We Started Small Groups, but they Didn’t Multiply. So Now What?”**

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We are often asked in North America, “*Why don’t our small groups multiply?*” To sustain multiplication, your church must form three distinct types of cells, just as New Testament churches did: **seeker**, **seeder** and **feeder** cells. Church-reproduction movements in pioneer fields include these three simultaneously. North America churches typically include the first two in the third, effectively stifling them. (In the diagram below, the word *multipliers* refers to mature believers who prove passionate about multiplication.)

	<b>Seeker</b> Cell	<b>Seeder</b> Cell	<b>Feeder</b> Cell
<b>Made up</b> mainly of...	<b>People who need Jesus</b>	<b>New believers</b>	<b>Maturing believers</b>
<b>Duration...</b>	<b>Short-lived</b> (members become a <i>seeder</i> cell when baptized)	<b>Lasts until members run out of friends who respond to Jesus</b>	<b>Indefinite</b>
<b>Hosted by,</b> normally...	<b>Seeker</b> like Cornelius, Lydia, Levi, Zacheus, or a new believer	<b>New believer, normally</b>	<b>Mature believer</b>
<b>Led by...</b>	<b>New believer</b> , mentored by a multiplier, or a multiplier’s apprentice	<b>New believer</b> , mentored by a multiplier, or a multiplier’s apprentice	<b>Mature believer</b>
<b>Chance of reproducing...</b>	<b>Nil</b> (folk do not yet know Jesus), although other seeker cells may start	<b>High</b> , provided that the new leader is being mentored by a <i>multiplier</i>	<b>Seldom multiply</b> enough to sustain a movement but can mobilise multipliers
<b>Objective...</b>	<b>Receive the living Christ</b> (not just learn facts about Him)	<b>Sow gospel seed</b> among friends and start new seeker cells	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Edify</b> maturing believers</li> <li>• <b>Keep non-multipliers out of seeker and seeder cells</b></li> </ul>
<b>Main activities...</b>	<b>Partying</b> as Jesus did, with activities to gather folks (games, barbecues, sports, outings) and testimonies by new believers, prayer for healing, etc.	<b>Learning to obey Jesus’ basic commands</b> , loving one another and starting lots of seeker cells	<b>Bible study, fellowship</b> , mobilizing for ministry, commissioning multipliers
<b>Common hindrances...</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Fear</b> of losing of control.</li> <li>• <b>Trying to push camels</b> through the needle’s eye (Matt. 19:24).</li> <li>• <b>Teaching dogma prematurely.</b></li> <li>• <b>Going directly to feeder cells.</b></li> <li>• <b>Wasting time</b> trying to force <i>feeder</i> cells to multiply.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Fear</b> of doing what Jesus and His apostles did.</li> <li>• <b>Jumping the gun</b> by taking folks into <i>feeder</i> cells before they finish reaching friends.</li> <li>• <b>Failing to embrace their cell</b> as the spiritual body that gives them their main pastoral care.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>The overly talkative and attention seekers.</b></li> <li>• <b>Excessive monologue.</b></li> <li>• <b>Discouraging multipliers.</b></li> </ul>
<b>Remedies...</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>‘Shake the dust’</b> where camels fail to enter through the needle (find responsive folk: Mark 6:11).</li> <li>• <b>Risk doing what Jesus and His apostles did</b> — let seekers gather friends to meet Jesus and hear what he is doing among them</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Let new believers who are family heads do at once what God requires of all family heads:</b> shepherd their families and close friends. (You are neither ordaining them nor naming them as elders.)</li> <li>• <b>Multipliers mentor</b> the new leaders.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Obey the New Testament ‘one-another’ commands.</b></li> <li>• <b>Dialogue</b> instead of monologue.</li> <li>• <b>Plan</b> members’ weekly ministry and encourage multipliers.</li> <li>• <b>Start another group</b> when numbers rise.</li> </ul>
<b>Helps &amp; examples...</b>	<b>Send examples</b> of how you have successfully gathered a seeker cell to GPatterson@mentornet.ws, and they’ll be posted in a MentorNet message.	<b>Helpful materials &amp; guidelines:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Train &amp; Multiply®: <a href="http://www.trainandmultiply.com/">www.trainandmultiply.com/</a> (proven)</li> <li>• Paul-Timothy studies (free): <a href="http://www.paul-timothy.net/">www.paul-timothy.net/</a></li> <li>• How to mentor new leaders: <a href="http://www.MentorAndMultiply.com/">www.MentorAndMultiply.com/</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Few need help with this</b>, as most churches already know how to start and sustain <i>feeder</i> cells.</li> <li>• Almost all books on church growth advocate for feeder groups.</li> </ul>

Additional resources

- Order G. Patterson’s *Church Multiplication Guide* from a bookshop or at <[www.WCLbooks.com](http://www.WCLbooks.com)>.
- To subscribe to *MentorNet*, or to download earlier messages, visit <[www.MentorNet.ws](http://www.MentorNet.ws)>.