

**re**group  
interaction for a new generation

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why groups at encounter?

# regroup

## a call to regroup

after a football team loses another important game, the headlines say the team is going to regroup. when a military mission fails to accomplish the objective and soldiers are scattered, the general calls for the soldiers to regroup. when motivation is lacking, when the plan is uncertain, and when success is unseen, the wise leader will call for the team to regroup. he's give a new plan, a new call, a new vision for a way to win.

in our day, the church is struggling with its ability to make the impact that it once did on culture. methods that once were effective lack their impact. formats that once filled pews no longer have the same fire. in this new generation, so many things have changed: the face of the enemy. the language, the fears, and their frustrations. one thing that hasn't changed is the need - to become passionate followers of Jesus Christ. the rising question is how that message is communicated.

## the land of yesterday

the land of a generation ago was a very different place. the landscape was modern. belief was determined by denominational alignment and the church was the bastion of hope in the community. the enemies of the land were the godless nations of the world, those in need of the gospel were of a different skin color a world away, and the town sinners lived on the other side of the tracks. into this world the church reached with hope, and developed methods that would be effective in their world.

## a time for change

we live in a foreign land compared to a generation ago. the landscape has changed. thinking has changed. people have changed. what has not changed in many places is the church. while holding on to theological truths as it rightly should, it has also held on to methods and attitudes that are no longer effective in the new culture of America. when challenged with a new environment, many resist and then develop attitudes that are damaging to the cause of the kingdom of Christ.

## a biblical mandate

it all makes sense when a missionary goes to a foreign land. they begin by learning their culture, developing relationships, and living with the people. they dress like the people, talk like the people, and then permeate the culture with the attitude and actions of Christ. because the culture has little or no knowledge of Christ, the Bible, or church, the missionaries show it through their lives. The concept is intensely Biblical. It is the way Christ entered the culture of His day, the way Paul impacted the culture of his day, and the way we are to change the culture of our day.

*For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.*

# regroup

## interaction for the previous generation

### 1 attend

in recent generations the church building was seen as the shining city on a hill. with its white steeple it was the noted place of hope, direction, community, and activity. it was the beacon for morality's influence in civic affairs. to discover a relationship with God began at the church building. the work of church members was to get others to "come to church". thus began door-to-door visitation, the church marquee, and church architecture that set the building apart from all others. believing began with attending.

### 2 respond

once attending the "outsider" was now prayed for, preached to, and taught. the goal was change. the expectation was that they would respond and change their heart and lifestyle to become a part of the community of faith.

### 3 agree

after responding, the new convert/member was expected to agree with the doctrine and practices of the church. "members" signed a covenant that not only gave them rights and privileges in church business matters, but it committed them to a lifestyle of faith that was consistent with the church's established rules.

### 4 relationship

after these steps the "member" was accorded with full membership privileges. they were now "in" and could have and enjoy fellowship in the new family.

# regroup

## interaction for a new generation

### 1 relationships

this is the starting point for effective group development and ministry for this generation. the believe-ability of people today begins after trust, acceptance, and love have been experienced. when this occurs, ministry can advance to the next level.

### 2 relevance

after trust, the next step is to introduce relevant spiritual help. it is at this level that Christ is introduced into the area of greatest need with a method and communication style that the hearer can understand. An irrelevant message in an irrelevant method is like speaking a foreign language to an unlearned hearer.

### 3 revealing

the third level of regrouping for this generation is to be revealing. at this level the Christ-follower reveals genuine aspects of their faith in authenticity and vulnerability. in part the receiver will begin to reveal their hearts, their questions, their struggle. This level can be emotional, vulnerable, and painful. It leads though to the level of greatest impact and change - the level of response.

### 4 response

this is the level of change. at this level the person or group has grown from trust, to hope, to vulnerability, and now to the point of response to the truth that they have heard. they are challenged to repent, change, and make new commitments to Christ in the very real areas of life.

# regroup

these 4 concepts become the basis for the “regroup” approach to small groups. these same elements were an essential part of the early church experience as well - Acts 2:42 *And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching (relevance) and fellowship (relationships), to the breaking of bread and the prayers (revealing).* as a result (response):

Acts 2:44-47 *And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.*

## ○ the big picture vision for groups

1. build relational community
2. bring truth to relevance
3. be authentically revealing
4. seek practical response

## ○ process of group growth

1. build relational community
2. bring truth to relevance
3. be authentically revealing
4. seek practical response

## ○ individual group times

1. build relational community
2. bring truth to relevance
3. be authentically revealing
4. seek practical response

# regroup

## 4 goals for your group

1

### build relational community

group leaders should seek to create environments where people can get to know one another in ever increasing depths of relationships. the environment has to be first demonstrated by the leader then adopted by the group members. it is in the context of freedom and life that people will develop an appetite for truth. elements include:

- acceptance, grace
- encouragement, hope
- interaction, conversation



2

### meet real group needs with truth

relevance reaches with one hand to all that God is and with the other hand to all that is current in the lives of the people. the successful group leader will do this with truth, needs, attitude, and action. elements include:

- relevant studies (to where people struggle)
- relevant discussion (staying on target)
- relevant need meeting



3

### encourage authenticity

authenticity is the openness of the soul without fear of rejection. while the soul longs for this, it is something we only do in environments where there is trust and safety. the authentic environment allows questions, doubts, and frustrations to be voiced without judgment. it allows people time to hear, experience, and learn from God in His time frame and in His ways.



4

### discover your group's purpose

as a natural result of God's work in a group, there will be some natural signs of growth.

- discovery of their purpose - why are we together? how can we care for one another? how can we engage the community around us and show practical love to outsiders?
- spiritual development - greater understanding and application of God's Word and ways.
- multiplying in number - new leader arises, desire to multiply, desire to reach out to others



# regroup

the need for community in this generation

the 4 stages of groups

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# regroup

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## relationships

the new apologetic of our day

1

Every generation and culture has questions concerning faith. It is the challenge of Christ-followers in every generation and culture to know those questions and answer them. The current generation of 20-40 year olds is not asking the same question that that their parents asked.

Their parents wanted to know about the believe-ability of the Bible - could it be trusted? Before they could believe, they wanted understanding. This is not the question of a new generation. After an era of fallen Christian leaders, ego-driven television ministries, denominations, condemnation, and hypocrisy, a new generation is asking not if the Bible can be trusted, but if the Christian can be trusted. Before they can believe, they have to trust the messenger.

When they sense authenticity, genuineness, and acceptance relationally, then they open their hearts and minds to the reality of a God who loves them. This is the great apologetic of our day. The believe-ability of Christianity begins not with the doctrine, but with the relational grace shown by Christ-followers.

The apologetics of this day are not discovered in books, sermons, or condemnation. They are understood in relationships. They are understood in acceptance, intentional love, sacrificial service to others, and in humility.

The greatest message to a world in question and in need is not heard in sermons but lived out in the lives of Christ-followers in their everyday actions. Will we show the acceptance of Christ that we talk so often about?

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# regroup

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## relationships

the new apologetic of our day

1

The greatest question and need to understand this new relational apologetic is not in the buildings we call churches, but in the very relational environment of homes. Churches have a preconceived environment of rules, regiment, and requirements. Homes have a preconceived environment of family, acceptance, relaxation, and love. For this generation they are a greater greenhouse for faith.

George Barna states in his conference, "Trends of Consequence", that the ability to challenge and change a person's thoughts about God is more likely to happen in personal conversation with someone that in a platform setting as is most typically found in church. This is because the conversation is rooted in the context of trust and relationship.

The greatest proof for a world in question and in need is not how loudly we shout or how deeply we draw our denominational lines. Instead it is in the depth of our love and sacrifice for those who are without. In what practical ways are we caring for those closest to us in our communities? How is your church spending its money - on itself or on the needs of others?

The role of leaders are no longer high-level strategists or trained theologians, instead we are facilitators of community and growth.

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# regroup

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## relationships

the new apologetic of our day

How well are you doing at this new apologetic of our day? Below are a series of questions for personal reflection in your quest for relational apologetics.

1

- who are you building a relationship with that is outside the community of faith?
- in what practical ways are they perceiving love from you?
- would you continue to love them if they never followed Christ?
- in what ways is your home open to others?
- its easy sometimes to think about loving someone in another country who does not know Christ. how well could you love someone with a different cultural background? different clothing? different music? different conversational language? different habits?
- would they say they feel completely accepted and loved by you with no demands for change?
- would you be willing to build a relationship without someone without having the goal of persuading them to come to church?
- would you be willing to build a relationship with someone and never speak verbally about Christ, but instead let your actions and attitudes speak louder?

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# group experiences

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level  
1

## begin with relationships

The great hunger of our day is for relationships. People long for someone they can trust, open up to, share their joys and frustrations with. And all without condemnation. Christian growth occurs in an environment of relationships. For this reason, every group time should include some time for intentionally building relationships. This can happen through ice-breakers, discussion-starters, interactive activities, or games. These activities prove necessary because they help people:

- develop trust with one another
- break down walls of awkwardness
- get to know one another
- to see each other in a more relaxed mood
- the chance to laugh together
- to take steps toward becoming vulnerable
- the chance to relax
- to get the focus off of themselves

For many people there is an awkwardness about discussing spiritual matters and bearing their soul before others. Introducing group times with these types of activities introduce a entry level of openness and authenticity around the idea of fun. As people feel accepted and open at this level, they will feel a greater ability to do so with greater emotional and spiritual issues they are facing.

The other uniqueness of activities such as these is that they help everyone see that no one is perfect. Everyone slips, says silly things, and can laugh at themselves. While small this step is significant. It is only in an environment of humility and authenticity that God shows His grace and presence.

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# group experiences

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level  
1

## ice-breaker questions

Ice-breaker questions do just what the name implies - breaks the coolness of first contact. They are necessary not only in the first group meetings, but in later times to help develop openness and trust. In early sessions ice-breakers should also include telling the person's name. As a group progresses in relational depth, ice-breaker questions should be varied and deepened. A sample of possible questions for different levels of growth include:

### light

- what is your favorite restaurant?
- if you could travel to any location in the world, where would it be?
- what is your favorite hobby?
- what is your favorite type of vacation to take?

### medium

- what do you remember most about your home as a child?
- who was the most influential teacher you ever had?
- what movie have you seen that you most identify with?
- what is the greatest frustration of your day?

### challenging

- if you could change careers today, what would you do instead?
- what is the most memorable event that has happened to you in church?
- when do you first remember God becoming real to you?
- what is the most painful life experience you have been through?

REQUIRED RESOURCE:

"The Complete Book of Questions" - Garry Poole  
1001 conversation starters for any occasion

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# group experiences

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level  
1

## responding to the ice-breaker

As people begin to open up and talk, you may experience a situation where an answer is given that causes some to feel uncomfortable. As a leader, the group will look to you to respond. How you respond in that moment will set the tone for the group and will establish boundaries for future interactions. A few guidelines will be helpful toward planning and responding to ice-breaker questions:

### preparing ice-breakers:

- select questions and activities that are appropriate for the group. think ahead about the backgrounds and make-up of the group, anticipating possible responses.
- select questions that will be a good lead-in for the study or discussion of the group for that session. This will prepare the group to be open for the study.
- pray for God to open the hearts. Ultimately God is the one who opens and changes hearts. Without His hand, our best efforts are in vain.

### responding to ice-breakers:

- most ice-breakers are light enough to not introduce controversy or confusion into a group. Occasionally the opposite will happen. If responses lead to an uncomfortable atmosphere, become suggestive in nature, are divisive or insulting, the leader should calmly yet firmly step in. At all times the leader should maintain control of the group setting. He/she should seek to cultivate an environment that is safe, loving, authentic, and genuine.

### deepening ice-breakers:

- as the group relationships develop and sessions unfold, the leader should be sensitive to common topics of interest to the group. These subjects form the basis for future ice-breakers. For example, when a leader notices a group talking often about movies, he/she should plan ice-breaker questions about movies.

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# group experiences

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level  
1

## meeting in homes

### the right environment

the basis of regroup is relationships. they are the basis for personal spiritual growth. homes are highly relational environments. they are the places where people live and interact. meeting in homes as opposed an institutional environment such as a classroom advances the relational dynamic of group light years.

### big or small

again the initial goal of regroup is to build relationships. this happens in groups. group size though is important. if there are too many people in a group, then some will drift toward the back of the group and not interact. when they don't interact then they are not able to experience the full impact of group relationships. when groups are too small there is an awkwardness about interacting. this does not lead to healthy relational dynamics either.

### ideal group size

the ideal group size is between 10-15. this size also works well in most home settings and provides the right level of interaction between group members. changes in group size in either direction should alert the group leader for the need to make some changes. he/she should speak with the church group coordinator at this point.

### group growth

one of the natural results of healthy group interaction and spiritual growth is numerical growth. when lives are being changed, then people naturally tell other people. they want to express to others what is happening in their lives.

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# group experiences

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level  
1

## shared group roles

the effective group will have shared responsibilities and not be the work of just one person. this allows group members to have ownership in the group, allows members to feel like their part is significant, and shares the load among the group. the basic group roles are:

### Host Home Provider

this could be one or more persons who throughout the session of the groups time together who open their home for the group to meet. the host home provider may ask other group members to help with the set-up and/or clean-up of group times. they should not feel they have to assume even their role of providing the home alone.

the host home provider should ask for volunteers to assist in providing snacks, drinks, cups, plates, napkins each week. for more about the value of snack and drinks in groups, see "Snacks and Drinks" later in this section.

a group may choose to rotate group locations throughout their time together. thorough communication should be given to make sure all are aware of directions and dates.

### Group Leader

the group leader is responsible for giving direction to group studies. it will be his/her role to determine study topics, prepare for studies, and lead discussions and studies for all sessions. more will be discussed later about choosing study topics and material in the section on "relevance". the group leader should also see that the other group roles are filled and functioning.

### Group Apprentice/Assistant

the group apprentice/assistant is responsible for collecting and keeping group information such as names, family info, addresses, phone numbers, and email addresses. he/she is also responsible for keeping a log of prayer requests, needs, and answers to prayer for the group. the assistant should provide a basic list of names and contact information for the group.

later as the group grows and reaches the need to expand, the apprentice/assistant will be prepared the new group.

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# group experiences

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level  
1

## shared group roles

### Apprentice

each group should have an apprentice who is observing and preparing to be a group leader. he/she should be ready to assist the group leader in all group activities (ice-breakers, leading times of prayer, facilitating discussion, Bible study, response time). the apprentice is working toward the goal of becoming a group leader.

### Snacks and Drinks

effective groups create an environment that is relaxed, homey, and interactive. snacks and drinks actually help foster this type of environment. they accomplish several things:

- **allow other group members to take ownership**  
when given the responsibility of bringing something, a greater sense of significance is assumed. this increases the group member's involvement and value to the group.
- **create points of conversation**  
when people are allowed to bring their favorite snack it is almost guaranteed that it will lead to a conversation. someone will say how good it is, someone will want the recipe, and now you've got people talking! snacks and drinks created your first ice-breaker!
- **open the door for relaxed environment**  
instead of entering a home and sitting in anticipation of starting, food and snacks allow group members to move into the kitchen, carry on conversations, and interact freely before getting into the study. conversation creates relationships and relationships open the door for God to work in your group.

How many snacks and the level of food provided is up to each group and the host home provider.

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# group experiences

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level  
1

## connecting with the hive

### the need

as with any family, community, or organization communication between the members is vital to group success. with community 2.0 we encourage leaders to not only find ways to build bridges of communication not only within the group but with the church leadership as well.

### ideas for building bridges of communication:

- weekly emails
- phone calls from the leader or assistant
- text messaging/emailing prayer request
- MySpace/Facebook/blogs

### weekly emails

leaders or assistants are encouraged to send an “organic” email to members of your group and the church leadership highlighting prayer requests, reminders of upcoming discussion points/scriptures, welcoming new members to the group, encouraging those not present and including reminders and updates of projects the group is working on.

### phone calls

a step above weekly emails is for the leader/assistant to call various members of the group to sincerely ask about needs, encourage them, and pay for them. a phone call during the week can often make a world of difference in building community.

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# group experiences

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level  
1

## connecting with the hive

### text messaging/emailing prayer requests

text messaging can be a blessing or a curse depending on who you talk to. ask group members if they would like to receive prayer request updates via text messaging before you bombard their cell phone and phone bill. but for members who are already taking advantage of the technology, email and text messaging can be a rapid way to keep group members up-to-date on prayer needs and requests. also be sure to include those without email or text messaging with a phone call when needs arise.

### MySpace / Facebook / Blogs

online communities can add another dimension to your group usually for free. both MySpace, Facebook, and many online blogs give your group an opportunity to carry the conversation from your weekly meeting into an online environment that's available 24/7. it also gives your group an instant place to point potential members to if meeting times and locations are posted.

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# regroup

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## relevance

### unlocking the code of the mind

the word relevant means “having a bearing on or connection with the matter at hand.” regrouping begins with relationship but it advances through relevance - bringing hope to bear on the matter closest at hand.

Jesus understood the need for personal relevance. He was “the Word that became flesh and dwelt among us.” He lived among them, spoke their language, understood their needs. before you see Jesus interacting with a person or group on an intensely personal level, you see Him interacting with them on an intensely relevant level. He would first feed them, heal them, touch them, or accept them. He related to them in concentric circles of relevance: first with their greatest physical need, then their greatest emotional need, and ultimately their greatest spiritual need.

the effective group leader will do the same in leading the group towards full maturity with relevance in the following areas:

- know the relevant culture of the group
- choose relevant studies
- guide relevant spiritual interaction (discussion, prayer, application)

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# group experiences

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level  
**2**

## knowing the culture of the group

Marketing in today's world has changed from what it was 10 years ago. Marketing used to be geared toward the mind. It was designed to convince through information. There were statistics and surveys designed to prove a products worth - "4 out of 5 dentists surveyed..."; "studies show..."; etc.

Today's generation makes it purchases based not on information persuasion, but on emotional, gut-level persuasion. This has shifted the attention of the culture away from informational fact-based choices. It has drawn a greater attention to personal relevance.

it is the task of the group leader to not only know the truth of Scripture but to also fully know their group. in this way he/she can truly be one who brings together all that God is to all that the group is. there are three basic questions that a group leader must ask, know, and respond to in order to be effective. they are:

- what is their cultural environment
- what are their pressure points?
- what is their past?

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# group experiences

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level  
2

## becoming relevant

### what is their cultural environment?

the first step in becoming relevant is learning something about the environment of the people in the group. observing the cultural environment of your group can give you great insight into how to best communicate with them. these observations are meant to give greater understanding of members in the group and not greater critique or condemnation.

the church in the past has observed these characteristics about culture and responded with criticism and complaint. while there is a time for taking a stand against sin, the church should also do its part in developing an understanding of the way a culture thinks, feels, and best receives communication.

to better understand your group's cultural environment ask yourself these questions about their lifestyles and habits.

- what style of music do they listen to?
- what forms of entertainment do they enjoy?
- what movies do they watch?
- what type of neighborhoods do they live in?
- what is their marital status (single, divorced, married, remarried)?
- what level of education do they have?
- what types of jobs or careers do they have?
- where do they shop?
- what style of clothes do they wear?
- where do they go for vacation?
- what type of schooling have they chosen for their kids?

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# group experiences

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level  
**2**

## becoming relevant

### what are their pressure points?

the second way of developing relevance is through knowing and understanding areas that are the greatest pressure points. in every person's life there are areas of pressure - areas that are difficult, challenging, and stressful. these are the areas of greatest and most recognized need in their lives. these pressure points can become the greatest areas of humility, brokenness, and need for hope. they are therefore the areas of their life that they can be most open to God.

the effective group leader will recognize these areas and seek to introduce hope, the Gospel, and Scripture into them. as relationships develop and the group leader is in tune with these relevant areas of their life, the doors to the lives and heart will begin to open. time, trust, and the Spirit of God are the central ingredients.

to better understand your group's pressure points ask yourself these questions about them.

- what types of crises have they most recently been through?
- where do they feel the greatest levels of stress?
- at what point do they face their greatest needs?
- what do they ask the most questions about?
- what do they talk about most?
- what are their greatest work-related stresses?
- what are their greatest relational stresses? (if single, married, divorced, etc.)
- what are their family stresses (parenting, in-laws, finances, etc.)
- what are their greatest spiritual pressure points (guilt, doubt, temptation, pride, etc)
- what level of loss have they experienced in life?

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# group experiences

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level  
**2**

## becoming relevant

### what is their past?

a person's past has profound impact on their future. Attitudes and actions are formed as a direct result of past actions. These can be positive or negative. A hurtful situation can lead to forgiveness and understanding or to pain and bitterness. Listening to these realities can give insight into effective ways of introducing hope and help.

to better understand your group's past ask yourself these questions about them.

- where did they grow up?
- what was/is their relationship like to their parents?
- what successes have they had in areas of their life?
- what failures have they faced in their life?
- what points of guilt still plague them from their past?
- what has been their involvement with church? was it positive or negative?
- what spiritual influences have shaped them into who they are?

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# group experiences

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level  
**2**

## discovering relevance

### know God

- what does the Scripture have to say about their need?
- where is the Spirit of God working in the group?
  - points of greatest attentiveness
  - times of tears
  - times of greatest question
  - times of greatest interaction

### know how to bring them together

the effective group leader understands who the people are of the group and understands something of God's design and plan for life. He then stands in the gap and brings the two together. He watches for God moments where truth and life come together. This may happen:

in group discussion

in group projects

in teaching moments

in interaction outside of group time

the most important thing a leader can do is navigate the group to and through those times. the leader's grasp of what is most relevant will open doors of understanding in this generation.

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# regroup

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## an environment of authenticity

### creating a context for honesty

# 3

the word authentic is defined with two concepts: 1) not false or copied; genuine; real. and 2) conforming to fact and therefore worthy of belief; "an authentic account by an eyewitness". These two concepts are vital to this generation before there is belief.

christians for the past generation have been faulted with the idea that they must "be good" even if their heart is not in it. the result in some cases is facade faith or plastic religion. there is outward ritual, language, and actions of what is good, but a heart that is far away. in some cases there is hypocrisy. what is practiced on sundays does not match what happens on mondays.

to a new generation today, this behavior is at the peak of all that is wrong with religion and especially christianity. what this generation does value however is authenticity. it values the raw, unpretentious, unselfish expression of personal opinion.

this is not something new to the practice of faith. Jesus spoke of loving God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength. He spoke His harshest words against those who practiced their faith in such a way as to be only actors or painted tombs of death.

the context of honesty and belief begins with a setting of authenticity. it is essential that a group leader work towards developing an environment where genuineness is accepted and expected.

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# group experiences

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level  
3

## setting the mood

### first step - personal sincerity

this calls for personal times of sincerity that begins with the leader. the effective leader will take time to share their own struggles, hurts, questions, and doubts. this will give greater credibility for what they have to say later on. again this is a change from a previous generation. it used to be believed that the leader had to have the credentials and a clean record. this made him believable. what makes a leader credible in this day however is his honesty - about where he has been, what he has done, and in establishing the fact that he is not perfect.

### the second thing - guarding authenticity

the second greatest task of a leader is in guarding authenticity when it begins. there will come a time when members of the group will step out into the waters of genuineness. they will experiment and "check the temperature of the water." if they discover that it really is safe; that there is no condemnation, no judgment, no criticism; then they will feel safe to try it again at some point.

other group members will watch at those times of vulnerability. they will watch to see how others respond to a person's voice of honesty before they chart out with their own.

the group leader must set the stage, tone, and attitude for this type of authenticity to occur.

### step three - pushing the boundaries

at some point in the journey to authenticity, tension will arise. when people personally reveal their hearts, it sometimes tests the boundaries of grace. they wonder if they will be accepted or rejected? there will be times when there will be disagreement and reaction. people cannot exist together very long without there being some form of tension and conflict. this however is not the end of the story or the end of your group.

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# group experiences

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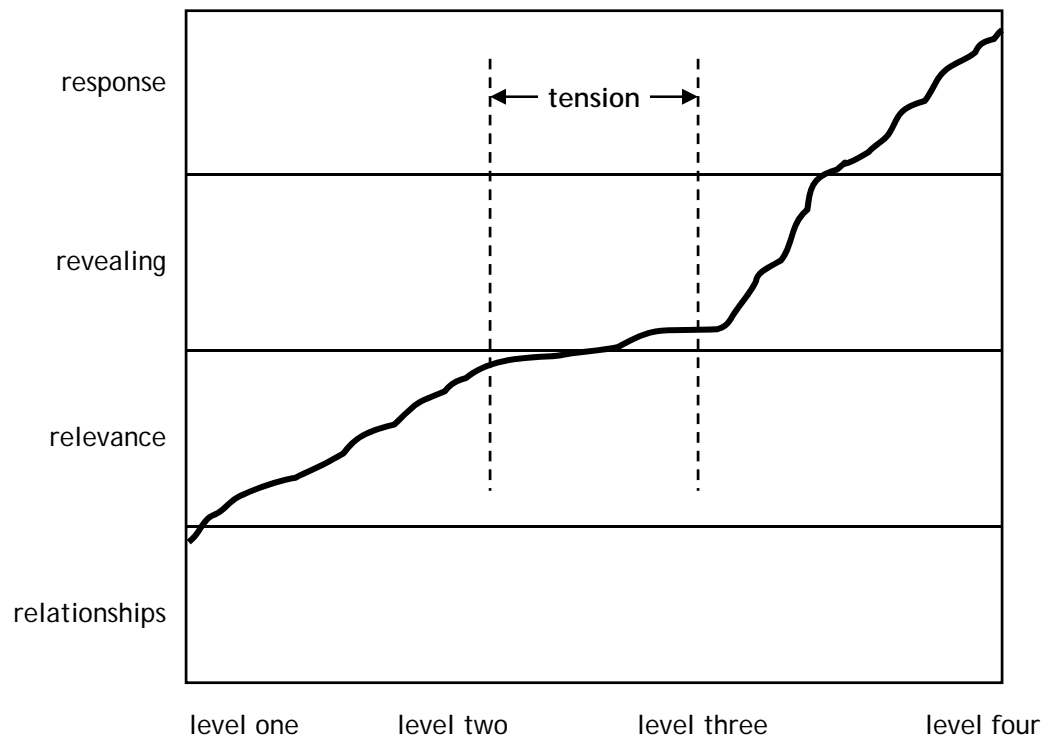
level  
**3**

## authentic tension

there is an inescapable point in every person's life and every relationship - tension and conflict. this is the point where recognizable difference arise. this level of tension usually occurs at the point of authenticity. at this level there begins to be an openness that creates the potential for disagreement and miscommunication. this is the point however where the greatest dimensions of grace and Christ-likeness can be practiced.

if navigated successfully it will launch the group into a new phase of understanding, depth of relationships, and growth. if not handled rightly, it will lead to hurt feelings, breach of trust, and greater pain.

leaders should watch for this phase of growth and face it with encouragement to forgive, understand, communicate, and love.



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# regroup

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## responding to God

### the moment we've all been waiting for

# 4

When the Spirit of God is at work in the lives of people, there is change, there is life, and there is growth. personal growth happens on the level of character, attitudes, and thinking patterns. for this generation, this level of personal response does not occur until the other three levels of relationship, relevance, and revealing have occurred. it is at this point that people have developed trust, observed Christ as He is lived out in the lives of people, and are ready to make life-changing decisions and commitments.

the effective group leader will be sensitive to the arrival of group members to this level. there is a time to challenge and call for change. there is a time to draw the net. there is a time to call for accountability. the essence of this step is timing. certain observable signs can clue a leader in to the arrival of this level:

- when defensive comments and questions come to an end
- when authentic questions about life and Christ begin
- when resistance is replaced with humility
- when there is a heightened attention to spiritual matters
- when there is greater desire to spend time with one another
- when conversations reveal vulnerability

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# group experiences

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level  
4

## hitting the target

### big picture

the ultimate goal of ministry at encounter is to make passionate followers of Jesus Christ through a relevant expression of church in this generation.

### close range

the goal of ministry through community 2.0 is for people to experience Christ through connected relationship and community life.

### center target

this type of experience and community life is targeted in some very specific areas:

- **personal growth**

leaders should seek personal, spiritual growth in the members of the group. over time there should be noticeable increase in appetite, choices, and actions of the group. the greatest way for observing this will be through group conversation and discussion and in personal interaction with group members.

- **group growth**

over time there should also be relational group growth. this occurs when the group achieves a greater level of comfort with one another in discussion and relationships. this will be seen as the group as a whole works through spiritual and relational struggles. the group leader may observe that members are also spending more time with one another outside of scheduled group times.

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# group experiences

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level

4

## hitting the target

- **action/purpose growth**

a third level of growth occurs when the group begins to sense something of their purpose together as a group. they realize that their combination of talents, passions, interests, and personalities are for a purpose outside of themselves. they use their oneness as a group to make an impact on the culture or society around them. this action could be seen in a special project, ongoing ministry, or service to others. while it may be tempting for the group leader to make this purpose happen, it will have greater effectiveness and meaning as it grows out of the heart of the group. the effective group leader will continually ask the question throughout the group's existence - why has God put us together? what can we do to impact others outside of our group?

- **multiplying growth**

the fourth level of growth that every group should experience at some point is numerical. there should be a sense in which the group is continually thinking of others outside of themselves that could be part of the group and experience God's power in their life.

numerical growth should not be forced growth, but should be a reflection of what God is doing in the hearts of the people.

throughout the group's time together, there should be the continuing thought - when will we grow to the point that we will need a new leader, assistant, and host home? when will we get to expand the group and the kingdom of God? who else can we reach?

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# group experiences

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level

4

## how's it going?

the encounter group leader will regularly check in with group leaders to learn of the group's progress.

group leaders should keep these 4 areas of growth in mind as they report to the group ministry leader.

### personal growth

- what are some ways that individuals are growing?
- what are some prayer needs of people in your group?
- what are personal challenges that some are facing?

### group relational growth

- what progress is the group making in their relationships with one another?
- what observable signs are you seeing in the group's progress?
- what tensions and points of conflicts have arisen?

### project/purpose growth

- what discoveries has the group made about its purpose?
- what projects is the group talking about?

### multiplying growth

- are group members praying and talking about inviting others?
- are new people visiting the group?
- is there talk and excitement about the group growing and multiplying?

**regroup**  
the progress of community

measured progress

# group growth

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## measuring your progress

every group goes through and grows through observable and measurable progress. the effective leader knows the goal and is alert to the progress of the group.

the ultimate goal of every group is to make passionate followers of Jesus Christ. this goal will be achieved as groups grow through the stages already mentioned. the following pages represent some of the more measurable dimensions of this growth process.

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# group growth

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level

1

## build relational community

Relationships are a process. They take time. They do not happen overnight. Real relationships develop as there is trust & acceptance, give & take, tension & release, conflict & forgiveness, authenticity & truth, confusion & peace. The relational progress of a group can be observed and measured. Effective group leaders recognize the progress and take steps to help it advance. They are also careful to not force it to advance beyond what it is ready for.

### level one

This is the first stage of all groups. People come together often not knowing each other. Some of the characteristics of the group at this point are:

- an appetite for relationship and spiritual change
- group members know very little about one another
- discussion involves information about one another (where they live, work, grew up, etc.)
- awkward moments of silence
- safe answers to discussion questions
- caution in talking or revealing too much
- guarded emotions
- nervousness
- uncertainty about mentioning personal prayer needs

level one is an exciting stage filled with anticipation and newness. The effective group leader will encourage interaction that is appropriate for this level and not push the group to a level of interaction and maturity that they are not ready for yet. It is a level of excitement and newness that should be enjoyed and made the most of.

the goal at this level is for group members to know, understand, and trust one another. this will set the stage for further spiritual growth in the group.

## goal: trust

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# group growth

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goal  
2

## interact with relevant truth

### level two

at the second level people are beginning to know and enjoy being with one another. Some of the characteristics of the group at this point are:

- discovering things they have in common (work, hobbies, interests, talents, etc.)
- beginning to share personal opinions, ideas, and are taking the initial steps to becoming vulnerable with the group
- beginning to contact one another and build relationships outside of group times
- growing comfortableness in being together
- group members stay after structured group time to talk and relate
- there is discussion and steps toward application of spiritual truth
- beginning to think of others who would benefit from being in the group

the real measure of relevance will be seen in the discussion and interaction of the group. it is easy to talk about subjects that are distant, safe, and far away from practical. it is easy to talk about the what others ought or should do. it is relevant and challenging however to look into Scripture and talk about what we've done and what God is saying to us.

the effective group leader will continually be alert to the tendency to "rabbit trail" or venture off target in discussion. they keep the interaction real, focused, personal, and practical. these elements lead toward relevance.

this level is not the end of all things. it is only a doorway to a greater level of spiritual growth.

## goal: expression

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# group growth

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goal  
3

## revealing the heart

### level three

the third stage of group interaction builds on trust and spiritual hunger. at this level the way has been paved for authenticity to emerge. some of the characteristics of groups at this level are:

- freedom and willingness to discuss personal challenges, weaknesses, past hurts, etc.
- response of compassion, understanding, mercy, and grace by other members of the group
- discussion that moves beyond information or facts about the Bible to personal heart issues about God and life
- desire of the group to see what the Bible says about the real life issues they face
- departure from “Sunday School” answers that are right, but often far from reality in a person’s life
- growing appetite of the group for full surrender and following of Christ
- desire to tell others outside the group about what God is doing in their lives
- creative and free expressions of worship and love for Christ demonstrated (music, art, writing, etc.)

authenticity can not be manufactured. it occurs when the effective group leader creates an environment for it. this will be determined by the group leader’s responses to open sharing of hurts, doubts, and questions other group members. as safe boundaries are established and others adopt them, group members will feel the freedom to open their heart and be authentic.

## goal: authenticity

goal

4

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# group growth

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## natural signs of life

### level four

at level four, the group has matured to a point that they are growing in all aspects: relational, spiritual, social, identity, and numerical. the four distinct levels of group growth will include:

- spiritual appetite  
when our physical bodies are healthy, there is appetite. the same is true with our spiritual life. when there is health, there is appetite for more. a group that is healthy will have a growing appetite for spiritual things, discussion, and interaction with one another. appetite blockers include unresolved conflict, criticism, judgment, pride, and jealousy.
- personal application  
truth that is discussed but never applied leads to spiritual arrogance. the measure of a group's growth will not be in the amount of Bible discussed, but in the amount of Bible applied. the group leader will use this as their measure of growth.
- purpose  
the group that is fully maturing will begin to discover something of God's design for them being together. their purpose will be action oriented, impact others outside the group and involve each person in the group.
- size  
healthy groups grow in number. their environment of grace grows to attract others, include others, and grow others. each group will develop new group leaders, assistants, and host home providers. their will be expanded vision to reach out and show greater grace.

goal: response