

SMALL GROUP LAMAZE

The day your small group begins meeting it's pregnant! Birthing is not only inevitable, but also desired! That doesn't mean it's something you're looking forward to, but the result of the trauma of "group-birth" makes it all worthwhile!

When the number of adults who consider your small group their home reaches into the "teens", it's time to plan out your birthing strategy. Use this sheet to help make plans.

First, have a meeting with the Small Group Leader, Apprentice, and your Coach. Discuss how you perceive the group separating. Leave your egos out of the picture, but do speculate according to potential apprentices, natural relationship connections, etc. Ultimately, everyone will make their own decision as to how they divide, but often it helps if you can suggest to them the way you think might be most logical. This takes the pressure off of them about hurting someone's feelings. During this time use this sheet to set the dates for the following:

PRENATAL (WEEKS #1, 2 AND 3)

1. Look for future apprentices and hosts. The best scenario is to birth the 2 new groups already with new apprentices in place.
2. **Talk about the upcoming birth and why this is important to do.** Listen to their hesitations, but remind them that Jesus' heart is always to make room for more.
3. The Shepherd and Apprentice need to share parts of leading the meeting. In fact, during these three meetings it is best to allow the Apprentice to do *more* than the Shepherd.
4. Divide the group for Word & Works time. Have the Shepherd and Apprentice go to two different parts of the house. Tell everyone that they are not making a choice of where they are necessarily going after the birth, but hopefully this will eventually happen.
5. That week it is VERY IMPORTANT that the Shepherds and Apprentices each minister (phone calls, social contacts, etc.) with the individuals that were in their part of the group when you divided! This will assure the people that no matter which way they go, they will continue to be cared for.
6. During this time the Coach needs to contact each of the families involved to give them assurance that this will be OK and to find out which of the 2 future groups they are leaning toward.

BIRTH (WEEK #4)

Meet as separate small groups but *in the same house*. **Be certain that you've been continually presenting the fact that this would be the first night meeting separately.** As people arrive, fellowship together and then go to the two different parts of the house for your small group. It is important that you both plan to end at the same time so that both groups can fellowship together afterwards.

POSTNATAL (WEEK #5, 6 and 7)

Groups meet as two separate small groups in the two different locations.

(WEEK #8 - 1 MONTH AFTER BIRTH)

Both small groups meet back together for a reunion! This should not be a meeting but a fellowship time of enjoying one another. It is also important to have any new members of both groups attend so that they can feel a part of this bond as well. They serve as visual evidence of the value of birthing!

(WEEK #9, 10, AND 11)

Both small groups meet as two separate groups in their two different locations.

(WEEK #12 - 2 MONTHS AFTER BIRTH)

Optional: Both small groups meet back together for another reunion. Generally by this time group members enjoy being together but find they have made the transition and their new small group is really where they are connected! Feel free to continue to regularly plan to do things together with both groups in the future.

ADDITIONAL INSIGHTS:

- Don't expect the members in your cell to WANT to birth. In fact, if they wanted to get away from one another you would have a problem! These people have likely grown to value and love each other. They have longed for community in their lives and now a birth can seem a threat to losing it. **BE EMPATHETIC! However, you have got to know that the greatest threat to community is becoming too large and / or ingrown.**
- It is imperative that the Small Group Leader and Apprentice clearly believe and present that birthing is the best thing for the group. If a small group doesn't birth at the appropriate time (around 15 adults) one of two things will happen:
 1. The group will continue to grow and become a medium-sized group rather than a SMALL cell. **Community will be lost** because sharing will become "surfacy" and safe. *THE SMALL GROUP DYNAMIC IS LOST AND COMMUNITY WILL BE LOST ALONG WITH IT!*
 2. The group will stop growing and become ingrown. It will be "us four and no more!" When the focus moves away from the empty chair and evangelism and asking who else God would want to benefit from this group it is the beginning of the end! The group moves from the dynamic of "Christ in the midst" (Matthew 18:20) to navel-gazing. *AGAIN, COMMUNITY IS LOST.*
- **The only way to hold onto community is to let it go!** Birthing allows the focus of the group to remain outward while continuing to encounter community within the dynamic of a small group.
- Be patient with your members as you take them through this process. Physical birth is difficult because the baby doesn't want to leave the safe environment of the womb for the unknown risk of the world outside their mother. But life is outside the womb! As you help your members through this traumatic time, you'll experience the life of God at work in and through your small group!