

CONNECTIONS

SUMMER 2001

UNDER THE UMBRELLA

Don't you just hate it when simple things get complicated, when we have to change just because things around us are changing? A lot of Coffee Breaks are experiencing this and they struggle to adjust. Some pretend change isn't happening and go on blissfully unaware. Some dig in their heels, agitate others and refuse to change. Some compromise everything Coffee Break stands for. None of these are very appealing options.

What is this change that is impacting Coffee Break? Two words: small groups.

Thirty years ago it was easy to fit Coffee Break into a church's small group structure because, in most cases, it was the structure. There were no other small groups and there was little other meaningful outreach. Things were simple. We didn't have to consider anyone else because there wasn't anyone else.

But things have changed. Somewhere along the line many churches incorporated a more comprehensive small group strategy, and Coffee Break became only one kind of small group. That transition has been a little unsettling. We don't always know if we fit with small groups. But we do.

Under the broad umbrella of small groups, Coffee Break is one specific type—an outreach Bible study for women. All the kinds of small groups a church has should fit in with a church's mission statement and fall along a continuum from just-checking-it-out groups to fully-devoted-followers-of-Jesus groups. As you can see by the illustration below, Coffee Break is on the continuum too.

That means we need to work together. Change can be good for us. It's good to stretch to see God's bigger plan for small groups. Consider these ways of working together to make Coffee Break a vital part of your church's total small group ministry:

- 1. Be supportive.** God is using a wide variety of small groups to reach people.
- 2. Be a team player.** It's important to fit into the broader structure of small groups. The Coffee Break director should be a vital part of the management team.
- 3. Be informed.** Become familiar with other kinds of groups. Work together to meet all the needs of people both inside and outside the church.
- 4. Be submissive.** Be willing to work under the authority of church leadership.

- 5. Be vigilant.** Fight for Coffee Break's goal of outreach. That may mean challenging some of the guidelines for small group leadership that are appropriate for other kinds of groups. Coffee Break targets the community, so we need a forum for reaching newcomers.
- 6. Be prayerful.** God is at work here. We need to hear his voice and follow his leading. Changes are challenging. They are also freeing, for when we work together in small groups to meet a wide variety of needs, then Coffee Break will be free to do what it was meant to do—reach the lost with God's love.

Betty Veldman, Director of Small Group Ministries

BEFORE YOU QUIT

Almost anyone involved in a serving ministry will face it at some time: the temptation to quit. Sometimes quitting is appropriate, but more often the words "I quit" are uttered before it's really time to give up on a ministry. How can we keep on giving without giving up?

• Ask for Help.

Moses asked his friends Aaron and Hur to support him. Exodus 17:11-16 tells how their literal, physical support of Moses led to victory in battle. In the same way, we need to ask others in the body of Christ to support us, especially through prayer. Be honest with one or two confidants about your needs. When Jesus faced

continued



Coffee Break



Small Groups



Story Hour
Little Lambs

SMALL GROUPS CONTINUUM



the cross, he took Peter, James, and John aside to share his grief and distress (Matthew 26:38). Let the prayers of fellow believers lighten your burden.

• **Evaluate your Gifts.**

Each of us has been given a unique role to play in the body of Christ. If you know your gifts, you can delegate or say no to opportunities that aren't a good fit. Much frustration comes from serving in areas of weakness rather than strength. If you don't know your gifts, ask your pastor or another mature Christian to help you make that discovery.

• **Count the Cost.**

Before you say yes to an opportunity to serve, get a clear sense of the responsibilities involved. A well-informed yes usually means a stronger commitment to the project.

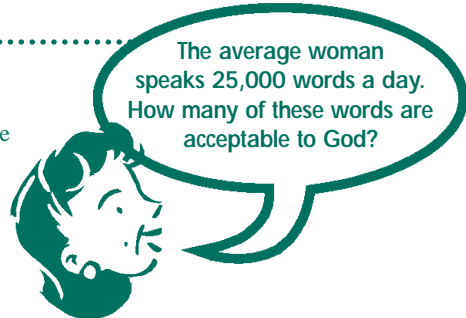
• **Take Inventory of your Spiritual Reserves.**

Jesus knew about busyness. He dealt with abundant needs. Yet in order to

stay close to God, he protected his times alone with his Father. In Luke 5:16 we read that he would often slip away into the wilderness and pray. Frequent times of reflection, prayer, and Bible study are essential if we are to fulfill Jesus' command to feed his lambs. **When the urge to quit is strong, check your inner resources. Are they depleted because you've been too busy to nourish your relationship with God?**

Reprinted with author's permission from "Before You Quit," *Discipleship Journal*, Issue #115, 2000 by Sheryl D. Giesbrecht, writer and speaker for *Kindred Moments Ministries*, Bakersfield, CA, 661-325-6967, KndrdMomnt@aol.com

"Outreach isn't optional, no matter what kind of small group we're in. God wants to make his family bigger."
Betty Veldman



The average woman speaks 25,000 words a day. How many of these words are acceptable to God?

MAMA SAYS, "NO SO-POPPERS"

The older I get the more frequently I hear the words of my grandmother echo through my memory. Mama taught me a lot through her life and words. I ggle now at one of her admonishments. With her small voice, and Southern drawl, she would say, "Honey don't ever watch 'so-poppers.'"

As a young girl I vowed I would not—even though I had no idea what "so-poppers" were. As a young adult I finally realized the words "soap-operas" had gotten lost in her thick Georgia accent. While that's great advice, even greater wisdom came from Her favorite scripture she would quote to me: **"May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable to you."**

Mama knew the power of words. In the book of Proverbs we see that the words of the wise are persuasive; that a person's words can be life-giving water; and, that wise speech is more rare than gold and rubies. I recently heard that the average woman uses 25,000 words a day. How many of these words are acceptable to God?

Notice Jesus' example in Luke 4:22 and how "the people were amazed by his gracious words." A few verses and several cities later, the people "were amazed, because he spoke with authority." **So Jesus was known not only for his authority, but his gracious words. Isn't that what we seek as Christian leaders?** When we speak the Truth, we want it to be authoritative, but we should also want it to be communicated with graciousness.

If our words reflect His Word, then people will be amazed and astonished at the One who speaks through us. For this to occur we must submit all 25,000 words to him daily, and pray: "May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, Oh Lord, my Strength and my Redeemer" Psalm 19:14.

And...as Mama says, turn off those "so-poppers!"

Jennifer Rothschild, Publisher, Women's Ministry eNewsletter, Issue 84, March 23, 2001, www.womensministry.net

REVERSING ROLES

When Myung Lee was first introduced to Coffee Break, she got so excited reading the *Coffee Break Evangelism Manual* that she lost track of time and was late for her first leadership training workshop. But God had a plan. He used her enthusiasm for inductive Bible study and her passion for him to touch the lives of Koreans around the world. After twelve years, Myung's name has become synonymous with Korean Coffee Break.

Now she believes God is moving Korean Coffee Break in a new direction, that of reaching 1.5- and second-generation Koreans. Starting July 1, Myung will step down as the primary leader of Korean Coffee Break and turn the leadership over to Grace and Kyu Paek, whose current role is to provide support for Myung. They will target Koreans who are bi-lingual and were either born in the U.S. or Canada or immigrated before the age of 15. Myung will continue in a strong supportive role for first-generation Koreans.

Praise and thank God for this remarkable, humble, godly woman. I have learned much from her. In walking with her in ministry, I have appreciated the rich diversity God has created. Though our languages and cultures were different, our hearts were one. Her diligence, her passion for prayer, her warmth and caring for others, and her relentless pursuit of God permeate all she does. She has been a valued co-worker and a wonderful sister in Christ. Praise God for all he has done in and through her, and for his guidance in her new role in Korean Coffee Break and small groups.

Betty Veldman, Director of Small Group Ministries

SMALL GROUP EVANGELISM CONFERENCE FOR WOMEN

"Where the river flows, everything will live" Ezekiel 47:9b.

The conference committee has reserved the location in St. Paul, Minnesota. They've booked the main speakers and scheduled the musicians already. Have you penciled in the dates of the next **Small Group Evangelism Conference for Women?** Jot a note to yourself on your December calendar that reminds you to circle this weekend when you hang that new 2002 calendar. Then, meet on the banks of the Mississippi River, Friday through Sunday, July 12-14, 2002. Look for more details in the fall issue of *Connections*.



SMALL GROUPS FOR KIDS TOO!

Do you consider your work with preschool children small group time? After doing a lot of training with churches and adults in small group leadership, I'm beginning to see that these small group principles also apply to our work with children. I'm seeing how there really are no boundaries in the areas of age, ability or knowledge.

Let's take a look. Here's our definition of a small group:
A small group is an intentional, face-to-face gathering, varying in size, meeting regularly together to accomplish an agreed-upon Christian purpose.

This definition certainly fits our weekly meetings of Story Hour and Little Lambs. Let's look at three of the seven small group principles and how they apply to children's small groups.



Small Groups For Kids

PRINCIPLES

1. Belonging

Our children need a safe place where they are loved and accepted. They must feel that they are an important member of the group. Knowing that they belong to your Story Hour or Little Lambs group will help them understand God's love and acceptance.

2. Learning Retention

A lot of learning happens in Story Hour and Little Lambs as we use a variety of activities that tap into the children's different learning styles. Group activities, games, and creative responses give the child an opportunity to respond to God's truth and understand it at his level.

3. Transformation

Life changes are made as the children learn how to be kind and polite to each other, as well as pray for friends, family and leaders. God does the transforming work in the heart of the child. They grow to realize his love for them, and they desire to live for him.

Would you like to Know Jesus? and the pamphlet, *Leading a Child to Jesus* are helpful tools available from Faith Alive Christian Resources.

Our Story Hour and Little Lambs programs provide small groups for children to experience the love of God and respond to him with love and devotion. Give thanks that you can grow together with these little children in the wonder and beauty of Jesus.

Diane Dykgraaf, Story Hour/Little Lambs Specialist

APPLICATION

1. Belonging

To help children feel like they belong, acknowledge each child's presence by name, and have a card ready to send to anyone who is absent. Let the children sign or draw pictures on the card for their friend who is missing. Also, take time to pray together for the child.

2. Learning Retention

Use a variety of learning activities, including some group activities so children can begin to understand what it means to work together. You may want to display some of their group artwork in visible places.

3. Transformation

Suggest ways that children live out the lessons they are learning at home. Little things such as saying "please" and "thank you," praying for their friends, sharing, and picking up their toys become big habits for life. Don't forget to pray that the Spirit will work the miracle of transformation in their hearts.

WHAT'S GROWING? KIDS!

"Our Story Hour has just blossomed!" says Julie VandenHeuvel from First CRC in Zeeland, MI. She praises God for the way he has worked in their Story Hour program, "Last year we had nine children, and this year we've grown to twenty-four! The Coffee Break program is also growing!"

Celebrate with Julie what God is doing at First CRC, and take a minute now to tell me what God is up to in your program. Send me a quick note, and I'll share your joy, and together we will thank and praise God.

Diane Dykgraaf
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Story Hour
Little Lambs

STORY HOUR

Preschoolers In Motion

Preschoolers need to move! It's a part of who they are and how they are made. Judy Comstock, keynote speaker for the 2001 Children's Ministry Conference in Grand Rapids, says that approximately one out of every three children are kinesthetic learners. And that means we must accommodate these children.

Take a look at your program and see if you're allowing for enough large motor activities. You may want to add a game, a relay, a drama, or music with motions to

your teaching style next year. You may just surprise yourself at how much fun both the teacher and student can have!

There is also a wonderful new teaching tool "hot of the press" to help you with music and movement. It's a book called, *Sing-Along Praise Songs with Motions*, by Jacquelyn and Jon Negus. You may recognize the title, because it goes along with the wonderful tape or CD, *Sing-Along Praise Songs*.

This book is a real bonus, because Jacque Negus has written an introduction

with basic guidelines for working with preschool music and motions. She has also given detailed instructions for movement with each song on the tape. I can tell you from experience that these are great songs for preschoolers and so much fun to do.

During the summer choose a song or two to teach to yourself. Then in the fall you'll be ready to move with the children as you sing and praise God together!

Look for this product description on the reverse side under *Idea Share*.

Diane Dykgraaf

idea share



Coffee Break

CALL YOUR REP!

There is a strong correlation between successful Coffee Breaks and well-trained leaders. Don't overlook one of your most valuable resources. Talk with your small group representative now to schedule a workshop for late summer or early fall. If it's been three years since you attended a training, it's time to go again.

In a conversation last year with Karla Anema from Bellflower, California, Karla couldn't say enough about the benefits of starting the Coffee Break season with a workshop: "It was such a good way to begin the year!"

50% OFF ON MAY/JUNE ORDERS

Begin this Fall with Inspirit

Inspirit Bible studies help ease you back into the season—a way to get a sense of who should remain in the newcomers group and who should move into a growth group. Take advantage of the half-price sale and order now for fall. For details, see the resources section under *Small Talk*.

SAVE TIME WITH PRAYER REQUESTS

In Wauseon, Ohio, at the beginning of class, Coffee Break women pass around a pre-printed sheet that has each member's name, address, phone number, birthday and a place to write prayer concerns and praises. Someone photocopies this list and each woman takes it home. They keep prayer requests confidential. The result is they save class time, they tend to pray more often during the week for each other and even call more quickly to offer encouragement.

OODLES OF OUTREACH IDEAS

Check out www.kindness.com and be overwhelmed with ideas for introducing your church ministries to your neighbors. How about approaching a woman loading groceries into her car with, "Hi, may I take that cart back for you?" and an invitation to Coffee Break? Some of the ideas are quite innovative.

NEWS THROUGH A CHRISTIAN EYE

Watch television program *Primary Focus* the week of June 24 on PAX-TV and the Odyssey network. The "Scary Church" segment looks at leaders who take a radical, cutting-edge approach to reach unchurched people for Christ. View a complete list of stations airing

Primary Focus at the Back to God Hour web site, www.btgh.org or www.primary-focus.org.

NEW RESOURCE

Bible Overview in Six Sessions

Give your small group a quick, but thorough overview of the Bible in just six weeks! Sound impossible? It's not, with Faith Alive Christian Resources' (formerly CRC Publications) exciting new study called *God's Message to You*. Written for use by seekers, new Christians, and even people with no Christian background, *God's Message to You* traces the basic redemptive thread throughout the Bible. It uses a unique combination of questions and answers and story-telling to cover large sections of Scripture. The leader's guide includes reproducible handouts, question sheets, and lots of leader helps.

Pastor Tim McCracken wrote *God's Message to You* and field tested it with friends and neighbors in his Fresno, California, community. He and his wife, Lori, are using it now with a small group in their home. Recently, Lori e-mailed their prayer supporters, "Tonight is our third meeting with three unbelieving friends—a guy and his wife who know a couple from our church (met at a child-birth class) and a friend of mine (met at our girls' ballet class)." Tim added, "We are having a blessed time. I continue to be amazed and thankful that there is such an open inquiry and readiness to hear."

To order *God's Message to You*, call toll-free 1-800-333-8300 or order on-line at www.FaithAliveResources.org. #216709CT \$29.95^{US}/43.45^{CDN}



Story Hour Little Lambs



EARLY RECRUITING

It's nearing the time to recruit leaders for children's programs. My advice: start early! Before people leave on summer vacation, grab their attention now by highlighting the opportunities for serving children this fall. Show off the positive aspects of leading Story Hour or Little Lambs with these ideas:

- Make a poster with pictures of the children playing and learning together. Write, "Come Join Us," or "We Need You" on the poster. Display the poster in a visible area in the church, and when you see people looking at it, tell them what a joy it is to participate in this program. Make sure they know whom to contact if they want more information.
- Show a power point presentation during a worship service or offertory.

Show several faces of children. Play a song in the background, such as "Jesus Loves the Little Children," or "Jesus Loves Me." Tell people how they can be part of this meaningful ministry by joining the team of leaders or by inviting their neighbors and friends.

- If your church has a ministry fair, reserve a booth and display information about Story Hour and Little Lambs. Let a video run of a typical Story Hour morning. Provide a game or two for children to experiment with. Be available to answer questions.
- Involve the prayer ministry of your church. These prayer warriors are your greatest asset. Keep them informed of your joys and blessings as well as your needs. Share answered prayer with them too.

Diane Dykgraaf

NEW!

SING-ALONG PRAISE SONGS

Jacquelyn and Jon Negus

Now the songs from Story Hour Year 2 are available in a convenient songbook! Motions are included, and each of the sixteen songs is arranged for keyboard and guitar.

Songbook
#001668CT \$9.95^{US}/14.45^{CDN}

Cassette
#001666CT \$8.95^{US}/13.00^{CDN}

CD
#001667CT \$13.95^{US}/20.25^{CDN}

To order, call 1-800-333-8300 or visit www.FaithAliveResources.org.



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SMALL TALK

FOR SMALL GROUPS

SUMMER 2001

JUST WHEN THE GROUP WAS BEGINNING TO JELL

Community Redefined

The first thing I noticed about Roseanne* was what she wore. I couldn't help it. It was the first time she attended the Bible study I hosted for singles in my home, and her attire was unique, to say the least. She wore knee-length, skin-tight white stretch pants that left nothing to the imagination, including the fact that there was nothing underneath them. Her spaghetti-strap white knit top, made for someone three sizes smaller (also with nothing underneath), left three inches of exposed skin around her rather generous middle. It



made me shiver. This was January in Michigan, after all! On her feet were black ankle boots with thick soles and white ankle socks that announced in bold red letters "I ♥ me." I did my best not to stare and invited her to help herself to the assortment of snacks and beverages in the kitchen, where the other group members were gathering.

Little did I know what I was in for. The boldness of her dress matched the boldness of her personality, and in the space of an hour of Bible study she sin-

gle-handedly dismantled everything I knew about responsibly leading a small group. She was loud and inappropriate.

She talked incessantly and challenged everyone's comments. She loudly protested any attempt to redirect her sidetracking comments, stating she had a right to speak her mind. She was in your face in every

"The boldness of her dress matched the boldness of her personality, and in the space of an hour of Bible study she single-handedly dismantled everything I knew about responsibly leading a small group."

way. As the agitation of the group grew, so did the knot in my stomach.

I sent up a panicked, "Lord, save me!" prayer. What was God thinking by bringing her here? I couldn't fault

her for coming. The singles' newsletter stated the small group Bible study was open to all singles, and she obviously had a need to be there. I just hadn't, in my wildest imagining, anticipated dealing with someone like Roseanne.

It wasn't fair. I had worked very hard over several months to lead a committed core of Christian singles to experience authentic community with one another and now, just when we'd learned to trust one another and share vulnerably together, Roseanne joined us. I shot pleading glances to the other group members, needing their support, as we struggled through the lesson together. Everyone was disconcerted by this unsettling presence in our group.

She was one of the first to leave after the study was over, and I heaved a sigh of relief. As we all pondered what had just happened, I begged them, "Please don't abandon me!" They looked at me in surprise and assured me they wouldn't dream of it. "I've been looking for a group like



Small Groups

SMALL GROUPS

PRICKLY PEOPLE

1. **She Talks Too Much.** She just runs at the mouth and dominates the group. Recognize her deep-down fear, seat yourself next to Ms. Talk-Too-Much or in a spot where she can't catch your eye. Once she has spoken, ask if anyone else has a comment or idea.
2. **She Rarely Talks.** She does not participate, and this very silence can dominate the group. Recognize her lack of confidence, and create opportunities for her to respond. Privately check if she is comfortable with the group. Let her know you value her views and appreciate what she adds to the discussion.
3. **She Knows Everything.** Having a corner on truth, along with her study Bible and concordance, this woman has the last word in your group. Ask her to explain any big words or hard concepts. Focus on the passage and ask others what they think. Refer to "group ground rules" that de-emphasize the use of commentaries and emphasize sensitivity to others. One-on-one ask her to help give others a chance to contribute.
4. **She's a Fixer.** She can't say one paragraph without the words "ought," "should" or "have to." She can diagnose your problem and prescribe the medicine all under the category of "unmasked-for-advice." Remind her privately that group members need acceptance, love, and a place to be heard. Jesus Christ is the "fixer," not us.

*Not her real name

continued

this for years,” one of them said, “We’re in this thing together.” Another said quietly, “I wonder who will learn more through this experience, Roseanne or us? We’re being challenged to put into practice the very things we’ve been talking about and learning.”

It has been a struggle, and we are all learning. Roseanne is still irritating and her dress is still outrageous, but she’s come a long way. So have we. We’re learning what it means to give unconditional love to someone who desperately needs it, yet resists it at every turn. She’s softening, and so are we. And we’re learning something new about **authentic community**. It’s not something Christ wants us to become too comfortable and cozy with. He wants us to share it with others and expand the circle of his love, stretching beyond our own needs to see the needs of others.

I never could have faced the challenge of Roseanne alone. But as we work together, we are learning how much we need one another. We thought we had community before, but it’s even sweeter now. Looking beyond ourselves, while also sharing ourselves, has enriched all our lives.

Betty Veldman, Director of Small Group Ministries

FUMBLING OUTREACH

Your small group has jelled over the past few months. Things are familiar and cozy. You laugh together and remember shared experiences. But for the person who has just entered the group, this atmosphere can shout, “You’re not welcome here.” Jeffrey Arnold, in his book, *Small Group Outreach, Turning Groups Inside Out*, says there are many ways for small groups to fumble outreach.

So, if you’re serious about welcoming the newcomer, then ask yourself these questions in advance:

- How will we handle inside jokes? Can we include the newcomer in our laughter?
- Will we explain what we are doing next and why?
- What are we communicating with our body language or group posture? Where will the newcomer sit? Explore these issues early and you won’t have to worry about the fumble recovery.

Marjo Jordan, Co-Editor

Jeffrey Arnold’s book is available through Faith Alive Christian Resources. **#21674CT \$8.99US/13.05^{CDN}**



FAITH ALIVE CHRISTIAN RESOURCES

On April 2, CRC Publications began producing and selling ministry resources under the new brand name, Faith Alive Christian Resources. To order, call 1-800-333-8300 or visit www.FaithAliveResources.org.

Half Price Sale on Inspirit

Save 50% on the Inspirit Bible study series designed especially for seekers and new believers. Order any Inspirit title in May or June and automatically receive the sale price. These six-session books contain all you need for a group of ten people. Titles include *The Whole Truth and Nothing But the Truth*; *Up Close and Personal*; *Does God Want to Spoil My Fun?* *Where Do I Go to Trade In My Hand?* *Holding Together When It’s Falling Apart*; and *Close Encounters of a Spiritual Kind*. Sale Price: \$9.95^{US}/14.50^{CDN}

Discover Your Bible Series Update

By May, all three parts of the newly revised *Discover Genesis* will be available. The first two of four parts of the revised *Discover Luke* will be available in July.

The Praying Church Idea Book

Practical Ways Your Church Can Pray
by Douglas A. Kamstra

The long-awaited companion to the popular *Praying Church Sourcebook* is now available. The power of prayer is vital to every small group. This resource includes dozens of prayer strategies that can work in your church. Also includes sample worship services, retreat plans, and a comprehensive list of prayer initiatives.

#216851CT \$25.95^{US}/37.65^{CDN}

God’s Message to You

by Tim McCracken

Use with a small group that includes seekers or new Christians to give an overview of the Bible in just six weeks. Read about the author’s experience with his own material in the Idea Share section of *Connections*.

If you wish to subscribe to the entire publication, *Connections*, of which *Small Talk* is one part, let us know at 1-888-644-0814 or jordanm@crcna.org. Or view this issue as well as past *Connections* newsletters at www.coffeebreakministries.org.

“Evangelism is the art of running your finger around the edge of someone’s heart until you find the hole that only God can fill.”

Unknown



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