

Models of Multiplication



There is no one right way to birth a group, any form of these three basic models can be effective; as can be a combination of them. However, many small group ministries have found that people tend to like joining *new* groups rather than *existing* groups; so at WMBC we have begun to focus on “Branching” – that is adding new groups rather than dividing existing groups (Cellular).

1. Cellular - this is traditional small group multiplication, where a large group divides its members into 2 smaller groups of equal size.

Positive Elements

- This is the paradigm most studied, understood, and implemented by small group churches around the world.
- All members can remain in community at a smaller level.
- Multiplication can happen as soon as a potential leader is developed.

Negative Elements

- Regardless of what all the experts say, it appears this method is the least likely to be sustainable and promote long-term growth.
- Multiplication is often viewed by group members as a necessary evil as opposed to a spiritual mandate.
- There is a disincentive for growing larger and members of the group will be less motivated to invite people to come to their group.

2. Branch - in this type of multiplication, 2 or 3 committed members split off to launch their own new group.

Positive Elements:

- Multiplication is seen as a positive outcome as opposed to a necessary evil.
- This model works the best within a “free market” system where everyone is encouraged to use their gifts, passions, interests, and hobbies as vehicles for evangelism and discipleship.
- Multiplication is something that members effect, as opposed to something that happens to them.
- Members are more likely to embrace the vision.

Negative Elements

- There is the potential for individual stagnation. Members most opposed to multiplication will probably never multiply.

- Potential for disequilibrium. Sometimes, the new group becomes the more appealing or exciting of the two groups and the original group suffers or becomes neglected.

3. Exponentiation- in this type of multiplication, everyone in the group launches their own group.

Positive Elements:

- This is the most pure strategy from a Biblical perspective because it recognizes that everyone should be making disciples.
- It is the easiest to manage logistically and administratively.
- Operating within this framework ensures that each member is focused on multiplication.

Negative Elements

- This is the hardest multiplication to actually pull off because very few groups have members that are all ready to start new groups at the same time.
- Requires long-term investments.

Multiplying Suggestions:

1. Talk about multiplying early and often.

Start from the very first week. Describe the fact that one of the purposes of the group is to raise-up leaders who will be sent out to lead new groups. At least monthly, pray in the group about the new groups to be birthed from this group. Remember people are down on what they are not up on. Keep the group informed of the plans and progress each step along the way.

2. Talk about multiplying in positive terms.

Do not speak of “breaking up” the group, “splitting” the group, or “dividing” the group. Instead talk about “birthing” new groups, “launching” new groups, “multiplying” groups, and “raising-up” new groups and leaders.

3. Pray about the best method and the best timing for multiplying.

It is possible to make the right decision at the wrong time. Maybe the group is ready to multiply, but the new leader(s) are not. Or maybe the new leader(s) are ready, but the group is not. Or maybe it is a poor season to launch. Pray about finding the best timing for the multiplication.