



## Evaluating Your Midsize Group Ministry –January 09



There are certain things in life that I do not particularly look forward to. These things can be at the very least uncomfortable, and at the worst, painful! Some examples would be visiting the dentist for a checkup or seeing my family doctor for a “complete” physical. Of course, another great example would be heading into my annual review as a pastor of adult ministries. The process of systematically probing into my body or even my ministry can be unsettling. What will they find? I guess deep down I wonder if something is wrong or if I will come up short. (Can you relate?) Yet, every task mentioned above is actually good for me and even in my best interests to pursue the process. Whether it is a potential decaying tooth, a suspicious spot on an X-ray, and even a potential character issue or an area struggling under my ministry, each situation can now be given the proper attention it needs to restore, resolve or just to review for further action down the road. A too close to home example is how God used an annual visit to a doctor in 2004 that diagnosed cancerous tumors within my wife, Cheri’s, body and by God’s grace her treatments have saved her life to this day.

So, as you evaluate your midsize group ministry to determine its effectiveness and overall health remember that this is actually good process to work through. I have broken a midsize group ministry down into four major tests:

- The “Scope of Ministry” Test
- The “Leadership” Test
- The “Disease” Test
- The “Productivity” Test



### I. The “Scope of Ministry” Test:

***What are the big picture issues of your midsize group’s ministry?***

As you get started, there is one question that needs to be addressed that will highly influence your expectations throughout this evaluation process: What is the role your midsize group ministry plays within your church as determined by leadership? Is it the key foundational ministry of your church, a key foundational ministry or is it just another offering of the church? Again, make sure your level of expectation is appropriate to the value placed in this ministry of the connecting and spiritual formation of adults. At Hope Church, our midsize group ministry is “a key foundational ministry” as we believe some people will better connect and grow in another setting like a small group. (Besides, our building space limitations prohibit setting goals of more than 50% involvement in midsize groups, unless we either add building space or strategically start midsize groups off of Sunday morning.)

The “scope of ministry” test asks a series of probing questions including what percentage of adults are connected in midsize groups as compared to worship service attendance, how is your church assimilating new comers, and how are your midsize groups working in synergy with other ministries within the church, when possible?

This test also questions if, and how your church is using small group options within your midsize groups. Finally, other areas addressed include if your midsize group ministry is in synch with the vision and/or mission of your church, overall promotion of the midsize groups within your church

culture, are there adequate resources (i.e. space, budget and equipment), and is there effective pastoral leadership and/or oversight given to the midsize group ministry?

## II. The “Leadership” Test:

### ***Is your midsize group’s ministry discovering, developing, and reproducing leaders?***

What has been gratifying for me as a pastor overseeing midsize groups, has been to witness how this ministry has been a breeding ground for growing leaders throughout our church. Of course, it begins with pastoral leadership intentionally training and investing into our midsize group leadership. This has then been ingrained in our community leaders, teachers, and leadership team members, to be purposeful about challenging people to get involved and see what gifts, skills, and passions emerge. What a joy to see Christ-followers grow to their next steps and become care & prayer leaders, midsize group leaders, elders or youth and children’s ministry teachers/leaders.

I really believe that half our job as leaders is to fulfill the purposes of a given ministry (whether small group leader, a teacher, men’s or women’s ministry leader, etc.), and the other half of our job is to develop leaders and reproduce ourselves, as we do it!

The leadership test encourages church leadership to critique the quality of leadership in place especially your community leaders and teachers. The type of training available from prerequisite training to ongoing equipping opportunities is to be critiqued. At Hope Church, we teach the *ABF Teaching Course* to train our aspiring teachers and when a new community leader emerges, I have them read the *ABF Class Leader Training Course* and we also work through several of my DVD trainings that I have developed.

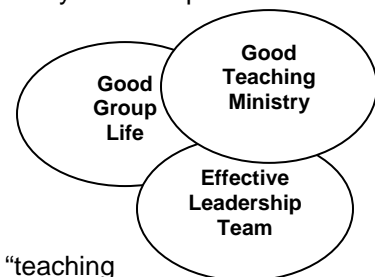
Other “leadership” areas addressed include the presence of ongoing staff meetings for communication, training, direction, prayer, etc., and how well do you show appreciation to your leadership. (This has been an area I have been trying to improve on!)

## III. The “Disease” Test:

### **Are the three characteristics of healthy midsize groups in place & in balance?**

You would all agree that midsize group’s are to live, grow and thrive, in similar ways that a living organism does. Unfortunately, just like a living organisms, groups may be susceptible to disease.

It has been said that FBI agents are taught to spot counterfeit money by meticulously studying the real thing. So, rather than list some potential diseases, let’s survey what healthy groups can look like. Following is an overview of the three main characteristics of healthy midsize groups:



**Good Group Life** – The group is “community” based as opposed to a “teaching driven class feel,” a strong group identity, effective care and prayer ministry, a balance in activities including socials, serving and outreach opportunities, and the group has a growth/outreach attitude.

**Good Teaching Ministry** – The teaching ministry is Biblically-based and framed with a biblical worldview, teaching ministry has a game plan, the teaching ministry encourages “life transformation”, a curriculum policy for the church is in place and followed, and teaching resources/equipment are available.

**Effective Leadership Team** – The team is led well by a community leader, a leadership team with set positions is in place, they have developed a mission statement for their group and keep it before their people, leadership team meets regularly (to plan, report, evaluate and pray), leadership team is developing new leaders within sub-teams.

Monitoring these three characteristics and keeping them in balance is not easy. At times group life is good, but the leadership team is on cruise control which will eventually take its toll. Over time, the teaching ministry can get stale and irrelevant. The group can drift and start functioning more like a “class” (a teaching center), as group functions diminish and an identity crisis sets in.

Diseases easily can set in and begin to erode any of these areas. As a follow up to this evaluation process, I would recommend working through my workshop on *Ten Deadly Diseases of Midsize Groups*.

#### IV. The “Productivity” Test:

##### What are your midsize groups producing?

This final test is broken into two parts including critiquing how you are strategically making disciples of Jesus and how are you fulfilling the overall objectives of a midsize group’s ministry.

First, does your church have a **DDP (Description of a Discipled Person)** in place? In my opinion, Rick Warren’s baseball diamond (Membership, Maturity, Ministry, & Mission) was the first stab at this kind of tool. Every church should consider creating a description of what a maturing disciple looks like with your own unique DNA lingo that fits the church culture. The next question is if your church has a DDP, are you using it? It amazes me how many have developed this tool, yet it sits in a dormant church philosophy document that is only read in new member classes. This DDP can be kept before your people through messages, websites, etc. Has your church developed a spiritual assessment based off of your DDP? Then people can gain a sense of what areas of spiritual formation they are doing well in and what areas need attention in their journey of faith.

The second area of the productivity test is based off of my **six objectives of a midsize group ministry**. How is your midsize group ministry doing in each of these areas?

1. To maintain a balance between **community** (organism) and building an **infrastructure** (organization)
2. To **teach** the Word of God for life application and transformation
3. To nurture an **outreach mindset** for assimilation, evangelism and discipleship
4. To see the community reach its **growth potential** spiritually, numerically and in ministry involvement
5. **To develop** each member’s equipping skills/gifts and invest into potential leaders
6. To help build the church by “birthing” **new midsize communities & ministries**

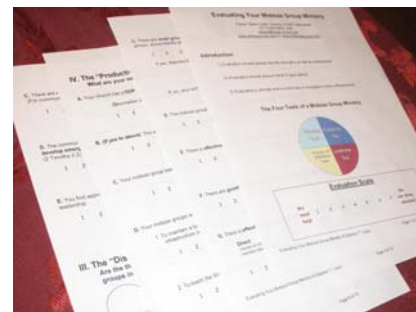
#### **OVERALL EVALUATION RESULTS:**

As you work through the evaluation, write down some overall **STRENGTHS** to celebrate and **WEAKNESSES** to address within your midsize group ministry. Finally, create some action steps to address initially.

#### **ACTION STEPS:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

*This article is a summary of a workshop just out in 2009 entitled “**Evaluating Your Midsize Group Ministry**.” It is available on audio CD (#321) and DVD (#421) and each includes a copy of the evaluation tool (pictured). [Click here](#) to see a list of midsize group workshops available that provide training in all four “test” areas. Go to [www.abfresources.com](http://www.abfresources.com) and then “Products” for more information.*



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