

Free Market Small Groups

By: George Waller

Most Pastors that I know are interested in getting their church folks involved in Church fellowship. This has been done in various ways, such as men and ladies Bible Study groups, or Home Cell groups.

I became a 'Charismatic' minister in 1975. Upon becoming a member of Liberty Fellowship, we were introduced to the Home Group concept. We implemented Home Groups in our local church and continued to use their concept for many years. The Home Groups were a means to get our church people involved with one another.

Several years ago, I realized that the Home groups were not effective and I expressed this concern in one of our Staff Meetings. Our youth minister suggested that I read Ted Haggard's book entitled, "Dog Training, Fly Fishing and Sharing Christ." This book is to help "Empower your Church to Build Community Through Shared Interests."

Upon reading this book, I became excited about the possibilities of beginning Free Market Small Groups in our church. A familiar scripture, "Let us not give up meeting together as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another." (Hebrews 10:25) I also had a better understanding of this concept and realized that we already had operating in our church an example of a Free Market Group . We had a very active group called "Paintball Ministry" headed up by our Youth minister. On one Sunday of each month 20 to 30 men and women would spend the afternoon in Paintball combat. They invited other church groups and individuals to participate. The interests and results of this ministry have been exciting.

I began our first round of Free Market Small Groups last spring with seven (7) groups. I asked some of our church people that I knew had some special knowledge and leadership skills, to head up these groups. The first groups were: Cooking, Golf, Knitting, Outdoor Grilling, Scrap booking, Drama and Paintball!

We are presently in our third (3rd) round of Groups. It has been a delight to experience different people coming forward to lead a group. We have had some very interesting topics and good leadership. We have had seven different groups each of the three rounds, which means that we have, within a year's time, had twenty-one (21) different topics.

We decided to hold each round for period of 10 weeks, with each each group required to meet at least 5 times within the round. The leader decides the date, time and the location of their group. Each group is asked to begin each meeting with either prayer, testimony, worship or a devotional. The meetings last about two hours.

Our church has had good participation in all three rounds. Friendships have been built along with learning. We hold a six weeks book study between each of the rounds in order that each new round will have a fresh beginning.

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