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LEADER GUIDE: EPISODE #5 LEADING SMALL GROUPS THAT DON'T SUCK

AN INTRODUCTION TO CHURCH CHANGER:

It's time to rip the lid off your leadership and push past organizational pain points holding you and your church back. **Church Changer** is designed to equip church leaders with practical tools, proven strategies, and best practices to help you reach more people for Christ and shatter growth barriers in your ministry. Listen today, and put key takeaways into practice tomorrow! We're here to collaborate with you and cheerlead for you. Join co-hosts Pastor Tim Lucas and Lauren Bercarich, along with special guests, as they outline a clear path forward so you can increase your impact, and let's have some fun in the process! New episodes drop the first Tuesday of each month.

EPISODE NOTES:

Overview

Successful small groups build real community, but to pull this off you must invest in strategic small group campaigns, offer virtual and hybrid group options, and equip and energize your group leaders. Fall is coming, the time for action is right now! Liquid Church's Groups Director Danielle Botelho gives practical advice on how to improve your small group systems.

Our Guest

Danielle Botelho is the Groups Director at Liquid Church, but to give a little history, she started as a Group Leader and then took on a role as Volunteer Groups Coordinator more than 12-years-ago... she just kept innovating and creating a healthy Small Group dynamic at her campus, that Liquid had to keep promoting her. And now she oversees Liquid Church's entire Small Group programming. Just because it's fun to note - Danielle also has her PhD in Pharmacology and Toxicology from Rutgers University. She's just one of those insanely smart people with killer marketplace experience that we were lucky enough to bring on staff. Welcome, Danielle!

Why are small groups so important to the health of a church and its people?

God has hardwired us to desire community - we desire to be known and grow closer to God through community. Small Groups are biblical - Acts 2:46-47 says "Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad



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and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.”

We are called to go and make disciples, and small groups are one way that we do that at church. Small groups are important to the life of a church and its people because they are a place where you can be intentional about raising up and multiplying disciples for the Kingdom of God.

At Liquid Church, you've committed to hosting 2 churchwide small group campaigns each year. What does that look like? How could listeners implement something similar?

This was a game-changer for Liquid Church. For our small groups, it created clear on and off ramps for choosing a small group that would fit for our church community in each season. Groups sync up to dive deeper into the same content at all of our campuses, all ages and stages. So, it became a shared experience for the entire church.

Each week, the pastor preaches on a topic around the theme of our all-church groups series, and best of all, small groups dive deeper throughout the week. We have found the sweet spot for Small Group Campaigns is about 5-6 weeks long. Small groups campaigns are a great momentum-builder for your church, since your whole church will be on the same page learning together both on Sunday and throughout the week.

Here are a few examples of all-church groups series that we have hosted at Liquid Church:

- [Wind & Fire](#)
- [Emotionally Healthy Spirituality](#)
- [The Daniel Dilemma](#)
- [The Chosen](#)
- [SWAT](#)

At most churches, small groups operate by doing independent studies, which our groups do between these campaign seasons. But these seasonal, shared experiences across the church are important because they connect your congregation, especially those who are new. It also creates a natural rhythm to develop leaders with intentionality.

Today at Liquid Church, we have a mix of groups meeting in-person and virtually. Some are even doing a little bit of both and taking a hybrid approach. How do you see those options as a win for Small Groups?

Before the pandemic, our Winter season attendance was always tricky...one or two snowstorms hit, and then groups would not meet for weeks at a time. The pandemic quickly forced us all to learn



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how to shuffle between in-person and virtual spaces. For families with young kids and busy schedules, virtual small group options are a game changer. As a mom of two young kids, I can put my kids down by 7pm and be online for a group between 7:30-8pm. No more missing out because of childcare issues!

How do you train and equip small group leaders for ministry?

Small group leaders are on the front lines of ministry at Liquid Church. From spiritual care concerns to tricky situations and hard questions, we want to equip small group leaders well. ReGroup is the annual small group leadership workshop that we host every Summer. At ReGroup, we host training for small group leaders, as well as onboarding for new small group leaders. We do skill building to help prepare leaders for the Fall season of small groups. Best of all, we also provide breakout time for our small group leaders to connect with their campus leaders. In those campus breakout sessions, leaders can practice the skills they learned, pray with their campus leaders and form a network of relationships with other small group leaders.

We also host various events throughout the year for small group leaders, but on a smaller scale. For example, we created a virtual silence and solitude retreat in January 2022 to help our small group leaders rest, recuperate and connect with God.

Overall, the best takeaway for adapting training at your church would be to just be in relationship with your small group leaders. Build relational equity with them. Pray with them often - just put it on your calendar! Text them, pray for them, and that invites them in to share prayer requests. This helps open up conversation and can tell you what your group leaders need in terms of care, training, and support. Go deep in care and community with the few that God has entrusted to you.

Churches Making Waves: Northpoint Community Church & Saddleback Church

As part of the Church Changer podcast, each month we want to spotlight churches “making waves” and doing great work. It’s not just about giving them a shout-out, but about pointing you in the right direction. For anyone working in ministry, it’s a great idea to see how others are excelling to discover some key takeaways that would work for you and your church.

This episode, we’re spotlighting [Saddleback Church](#). Saddleback’s Global Small Groups Pastor, Steve Gladen, founded the Small Group Network, which is an international community that connects, equips, and inspires those leading small group ministries. You can post questions and resources in this forum to discuss with small group ministry leaders from all around the world. It’s definitely helpful to learn from what worked for other churches, what didn’t work, and so on. You



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can even connect regionally with leaders in your area. You can [click here](#) to join a Small Group Network Huddle.

Something Fun, Something Free

[Group Guide Template & Example](#) - We welcome you to use this Group Guide Template from Liquid Church as a starting point to help you provide your small groups and small group leaders with helpful resources for each small group meeting.

[Virtual Silence & Solitude Retreat for Leaders](#) - If you're considering hosting your own silence and solitude retreat for the small group leaders at your church, check out this guide for a virtual silence & solitude retreat!

[Model Apprenticeship](#) - Wondering where to start when it comes to modeling apprenticeship in your small group ministry? Check out this helpful article all about training up disciple multipliers.

[Liquid Church Group Guide Database](#) - For additional group guide inspiration, check out Liquid Church's database of Group Guides for small group leaders and participants!

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Continue the conversation! Here are questions to ask yourself and your team to help your church thrive. We hope Church Changer will inspire you to put into practice what we discuss each month!

1. How are you currently doing small group ministry at your church?



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2. What is one key takeaway that you can implement tomorrow to improve the small group experience at your church?

3. How has the pandemic changed your thinking regarding small group strategy?

4. What steps will you take to invest in your small group leaders by way of spiritual care and training?

We are rooting for you! May 2022 be the year you shatter growth barriers in your ministry!

