

CHAPTER SIX

NEVER SAY COMFORTABLE

JOHN BUTLER

No doubt you've heard the expressions many times: "Find your comfort level"... "What are you comfortable with?"... "As comfortable as an old pair of shoes."

We love our comfort, don't we? Our urge to pursue pleasure is deep and universal. Yet there are many places in our lives where God desires to put this urge to death. This may sound harsh, but I know from personal experience—including many confrontations over my own love of comfort—that it is true. Small groups can provide excellent opportunities for us to die to excessive love of comfort by embracing the changes and challenges God brings our way.

One day many years ago, our pastor announced a change in the small-group strategy. For a year we had been leading our small-group members into closer relationships. It had been a lot of work, but we had made real progress, and several new believers were attending. Exciting things were taking place in these new Christians' lives. Now, due to a new approach to small groups, there would be some reorganization. As leaders, we might have some of the same folks in our "new" groups, but things were definitely going to change.

We had an expression back then (used when someone was about to get yanked through a keyhole): "Constant change is here to stay." I hated that expression. And I did not like the new strategy my pastor was adopting.

What was I experiencing? The challenge of change, made worse by selfishness and a prideful attitude. In my view, we had worked hard to get our group to a healthy place, and now had to let it go. The lesson here is how easily small-group leaders (and members) can become self-absorbed and territorial. We can forget that small groups are intended to serve the goals of the local church—that they are not ends in themselves. There are

MEMORABLE MOMENTS IN SMALL-GROUP HISTORY

A small-group leader in our church discovered the limits of spontaneity one evening when, during worship, he suddenly announced a time of communion. The home where they were meeting had nothing that could be considered a traditional communion drink. But that didn't stop our innovative leader. He found a creative substitute. When "the cup" came around, the group members had a unique sacramental experience—iced tea, instant, with lemon.

— Frank Ecelbarger (Burke, VA)

higher purposes than just "our group."

The approach to small groups in our church has matured over the years. Some of these changes have posed challenges to our comfort levels. Even simple things such as a renewed emphasis on evangelism, the addition of new people, changes in leadership, or some other shift in membership can seem unwelcome. Without keeping the mission of the local church in view, small groups become isolated and ingrown.

Make Way for New People!

For Further Study:

Read Proverbs 25:16. Does the Bible tell us we can have "too much of a good thing"?

Small groups are often very effective in providing members with care and true fellowship. It is not uncommon to see close bonds of friendship form within groups, especially if the groups are pursuing biblical fellowship. Could there be anything wrong with something as good and as scriptural as this? Can there be too much of a good thing? Sometimes, yes. Even biblical fellowship, when pursued with the wrong motives, can tempt us to adopt false priorities.

My neighbor recently found termites all over his living room rug, and swarms of them in his yard (the yard *right next* to mine!). I'm hoping pest-control efforts have permanently solved the problem. But as scary a sight as swarms of termites may be, these vermin are far more dangerous when they remain unseen. A home infested with termites can look perfectly normal on the outside, yet all the while the structure is being weakened.

Something similar can happen with small groups. Just as homeowners must stay on the lookout for termites, small-group members must be on guard against *koinonitis*, that deadly foe of healthy groups and healthy churches. This strange word is a humorous extension of the term *koinonia*, the New Testament Greek word for biblical fellowship.

"Koinonitis" is a kind of "disease" we catch when we start loving *koinonia* too much—for example, to the

1 You arrive for your small-group meeting and see 1) a table set with plates of brownies, 2) some visitors sitting together in a corner, and 3) your best friend waving from across the room. Which place will you go first?

exclusion of evangelism—and thus become ingrown and selfish. This sinful tendency must be resisted wholeheartedly. There must always be room in our hearts to embrace those whom God is adding to us, without any sense of intrusion or inconvenience. Indeed, small groups are excellently suited to evangelizing the lost and discipling new believers.

In the small group. In our church (for the reasons set forth in Chapter One), we ask that our members be involved in a small group. This expectation is communicated in our literature, our messages, our church membership course, and elsewhere. Therefore, we try to make it easy for new people to become involved in this aspect of church life. Yet there are some natural obstacles.

Imagine you are going to a small-group meeting for the first time and you don't know anyone, or maybe just one or two people. Most people find it intimidating to walk into a house full of strangers. Guests don't always know what to anticipate or what is expected of them. I know of a man who thought the dress code was fairly formal for small-group meetings, so he wore his Sunday best. He felt awkward as the members of the group arrived very casually dressed.

A group that has met for any length of time develops its own culture (some very bizarre, I might add)—a “local dialect,” certain food rituals, inside jokes, even possibly its own time zone (for example, a starting time of 7:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time may be the equivalent of 7:20 p.m. Eastern Small Group Time)! It's easy for first-timers to feel uncomfortable.

In addition, our lives become busy. We develop patterns of socializing that may leave little room for newcomers to the small group—a regular “family time,” sports activities, children's play time, coffee together. These are good and valuable, but we must guard against any appearance of becoming “cliquish” or exclusive in our behavior and attitudes. These things are sin and have no place in our small groups.

Consequently, all of us must reject the selfish tendency to gravitate only toward those in our group whom we know best...to sit by the same people and talk about our common interests—sports, hobbies, our children, whatever. Over time it's easy to settle into comfortable relation-

Meditate on Romans

12:10. How could you apply this verse in relating to a visitor in your group?

Meditate on Romans

12:13. What is the main thing you share when you practice hospitality? Yourself!

ships, even feeling some annoyance at newcomers or, for that matter, anyone in the group who might dare to break our routine. In fact, sometimes believers can treat newcomers to the church as if they are somehow unworthy of our attention. The root of this tendency is self-centeredness—yet Scripture charges us to think of others as more important than ourselves (Php 2:3).

A church is not to be a closed culture, but a place of life and hope for the desperate. As the church, we are called to disciple the nations, welcoming all who will enter. What do you do—personally—to ensure guests feel welcome at your meetings? Are guests simply the leader's responsibility or do you take it upon yourself, whatever your role in the group, to get involved? (Any signs of *koinonitis*?) Here are some suggestions.

- Greet guests and invite them to be a part of your conversation by introducing them to others in the group. "Ed, have you met Mike yet? This is his first time here."
- Consider how to involve guests in your activities during the week. "Hey Mike—a bunch of the guys are going to watch the game tomorrow night at my house. Can you come over and hang out with us?"
- Take an interest in their lives and care for them. Find out about their world and if there are ways to serve them through prayer, practical help, or encouragement.

Next, ask yourself these questions about your friendships:

- How long has it been since I included someone new in my regular activities?
- Do others feel welcome to become involved in my conversations and activities?
- What steps have I taken to include someone new in what I'm doing?
- Am I willing to widen my circle of relationships?
- If not, why?

Paul appeals to us to "look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others" (Php 2:4). Are we willing to share our friends and ourselves with new people? (Any signs of *koinonitis* yet?)

At the Sunday meeting. When people visit a church for the first time, they may face hurdles no less difficult than those of first-time visitors to a small group. Will the pastor and message be orthodox, understandable, and relatable?

What style of worship music is played there? What ministries are available for children and teens?

For better or worse, churches answer one critical question for guests almost immediately: “Will there be room for me here?” Consider the following issues.

- What kind of welcome will visitors receive when they are identified?
- Will someone go out of his way to greet them warmly?
- Will someone help them find their way around the building?
- Will anyone build a relational bridge through an invitation to lunch or a follow-up visit or telephone call?

Please don’t answer these questions hastily. Ask them again—and ask them *of yourself*, not just of your church. How are you really doing in these areas? When was the last time *you* took the initiative toward a guest?

The responsibility for welcoming new people falls on every church member. Through our attitudes and actions, we can “tell” people that our church simply has no room for them. When we do this, new people look elsewhere, or they may give up on church altogether. We must personally, actively, make room for new people. A large percentage of those who decide to stay in a church have been the recipients of someone’s personal interest and initiative. Do

For Further Study:

Read 2 Corinthians 7:2. What was Paul’s appeal to the church at Corinth? How much room is there in your heart for new people?

2 James 2:1-4 warns us against the sin of favoritism—in this case, treating well-dressed visitors to our meetings better than we treat poorly dressed ones. But favoritism can take many forms. Which of the following forms of favoritism have been a problem for you? (Check any that apply.)

When visitors are	Rather than
<input type="checkbox"/> Unattractive	Attractive
<input type="checkbox"/> Withdrawn	Outgoing
<input type="checkbox"/> Of another race	Of your race
<input type="checkbox"/> Apparently sad	Apparently happy
<input type="checkbox"/> About your age	Significantly older/younger
<input type="checkbox"/> Different in their lifestyle or dress	A lot like you in those areas

you feel personal responsibility to welcome and include guests in the life of the church? (Look again, any signs of *koinonitis yet?*)

Many Hands Make Light Work

The small-group leader is limited in his capacity to care effectively for everyone. I recently spoke with a small-group leader’s wife who said poignantly, “It’s so exhausting to be the only one reaching out....”

Fortunately, in this case those words expressed a contrast with the past. A number of people from several small groups had gone out of their way to welcome a foreign student. The stu-

dent returned to his home country challenged by the gospel and by the love he had felt from so many in our church. But my guess is that countless small-group leaders have uttered the same sort of statement—out of frustration: “It’s so exhausting to be the only one....”

No heroes necessary. When you do help out, how do you perceive your own acts of service? When everyone pitches in with the right attitude, a group can make a tremendous impact. Make this your goal. Make it the status quo in your group.

I have a friend who was a U.S. Army Airborne Ranger infantry officer. Although he was already an infantry officer when he applied to Ranger School, at some point—like all Rangers—he made the decision that being a “regular” army guy was not enough...that the intense additional training needed to be a Ranger was worth the effort... that jumping out of an airplane would be fun...that being

thrown into the most demanding and dangerous combat situations was not just a job, but an adventure!

Too often, I consider myself some kind of “Special Forces” soldier, a “breed apart” because of some puny act of service that challenged me in some small way! We can all be tempted to feel this way about serving others. But that’s just pride—because serving people is

normal New Testament Christianity, not some elite operation requiring heroic effort.

Personal growth through caring. As you get to know new people in your small group, you are likely to find yourself passing on to them some insight or wisdom regarding the Christian life. It just happens that way. But even on such informal occasions, difficult questions can arise that have no easy answers. And that’s often OK—God stretches us at times. Needs of others in the small group teach us to put our love into action. Again, Paul tells us that we are “called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather serve one another in love” (Gal 5:13).

Obviously, not everyone is able to handle all situations. But as the needs of new folks arise, our own heart attitudes are revealed. Will we accept inconvenience in order to serve?

“ The duties of the Ministry will constantly exercise Christian self-denial. Thus it was with our Master. His food and rest were even foregone or forgotten in his absorbing delight in saving souls. Seasons of necessary retirement were interrupted without an upbraiding word. Hunger, thirst, cold, or fatigue set no bounds to the determined forgetfulness of Himself.¹ ”

— Charles Bridges

Meditate on Luke 22:25-27. This passage directly challenges a core concept of worldly thinking. Does it challenge you, too?

People confronted with meeting a practical need or trying to share an insight on a difficult issue grow as a result of making themselves available. Do we belong to a small group because as a member we are served and blessed—or

““ Serving others usually requires no special talent or ability. But it does take a servant attitude to want to serve others, as well as an observant eye and mind to see what needs to be done. If we have a servant attitude, we can develop an observant eye. The reason most of us do not see opportunities to serve is that we are continually thinking about ourselves instead of others.²

— Jerry Bridges

because we recognize God’s call to serve others? When our focus is on the second reason, the first will take care of itself.

In fact, as responsibility for the care of newcomers is distributed throughout the group, members who come into a “caring” role can experience great personal growth as they are tested and challenged. Among other things, selfishness is revealed and, ideally, confronted. Comfort

levels are stretched, and maturity levels rise. Serving others, in whatever capacity, makes us more like Christ!

Several years ago a family in our church was in a horrible auto accident. The husband, wife (seven months pregnant), and their two young sons were injured. The couple lost their baby and the wife suffered through a lengthy recovery from her injuries. Their small group, along with the church, responded unselfishly to meet practical needs, pray, and provide comfort. Not only did this couple receive effective care, but the wife’s parents were deeply moved by the example of Christianity they saw. Their response was, “There really are caring and loving people in church.”

Neighbors were amazed by the house-cleaning crews, provision of meals, and sheer number of friends showing up. In a dramatic demonstration of Christianity, a small group took practical, loving action and the members grew in Christ-likeness.

For Further Study:

Read John 13:34-35. What is it about Christian love that makes it stand out so clearly to everyone?

Starting New Groups

It’s an unsettling experience. Maybe you’ve been there, too. One day some time ago I began pulling on my favorite pants, only to discover, to my dismay, that there was more *me* than there was pants. Without my ever noticing, the ol’ body had subtly begun moving south. (Whenever I tell this story, certain friends question my use of the term “subtly.” In their concern for accuracy, they also note

that, technically speaking, this was not an *unsettling* experience, but one involving *asettling* of my mid-section.)

The pants problem was one of capacity. Those particular pants were made for someone approximately the size I had once been! We see a similar dynamic at work in small groups—all have a certain capacity. When the natural capacity is exceeded, discomfort follows. The level of care and overall effectiveness of a small group can diminish greatly if the group grows too large. An oversized group often produces frustrated members who may drift away from involvement. Suddenly the group grows smaller again—but for the wrong reasons!

Small groups benefit by growing...and then multiplying before they get too large. If our small groups are effective at care, outreach, biblical fellowship, and the use of spiritual gifts, they will naturally attract people. (Who doesn't want to be part of a group that works?) The key to a healthy, growing group is the attitude of the individual member. Each must contribute to the growth of his or her group and do what is needed to help sustain the momentum of that growth.

If this is the attitude of the members, growth will be exciting because of the sense of *ownership* each one feels. Numerical growth within the group will be rewarding for everyone, not just one or two people. Active participation will position the group to multiply more easily because of the shared workload, common mission, and willingness to be used by the Lord in the service of his people.

The benefits to creating more small groups are numerous. New groups keep us in "adventure mode." New

groups allow for the release of new leadership into the church. And new groups mean more room for those the Lord adds to the local church.

Releasing New Leadership

My wife and I often tease our young daughter by telling her she can't celebrate any more birthdays. Our point is that, at her current age, she is the picture of perfect cuteness, so we want to keep her just as she is. Somehow, she is not particularly open to that idea. She wants to be a big girl. I guess I understand. I, too, would not have

For Further Study:

When a vibrant community of believers proclaims the gospel in bold, clear terms, what is the result? (See Acts 2:47 and 5:14)

3 Which of the following traits suggests that members of a small group are in "adventure mode"?

- Members regularly ask God to show them new ways to serve in the group
- The group goes skydiving together once a month
- Koinonitis is less popular than room-temperature coffee
- Members have more good outreach ideas than they can possibly implement
- The official group snack food changes from cookies to sushi

grown as a person or leader if someone had not given me room to mature.

Today, by God's grace, I am a pastor serving a church in the Virginia Beach area. But I didn't just wake up one day like Rip Van Winkle from his nap to discover I was in pastoral ministry. Over the years, there was a very real process of growth and adjustment as I chose to embrace new ministry opportunities.

In fact, I needed someone to push me along. It would not have been healthy for me to remain, in effect, a new believer for years. God desires us all to be increasingly fruitful in our service to him.

Shortly after we married, my wife and I were privileged to be involved in the early stages of a new church. The experience proved very beneficial to our growth. I began leading worship and carrying some responsibility for a small group. Soon I was asked to lead a small group. Eventually, through many stages, I came into full-time ministry. I know firsthand the benefits of being trained and released into new spheres of service, and I am grateful for the way God used wise friends to encourage me to accept new challenges. There's no question that many people are simply an invitation away from greater ministry responsibility in the local church.

During my years in pastoral ministry, I have approached numerous people about the prospect of leading a small group. The nearly universal response has been, "Me? Now?

But I'm not ready!" Undaunted, I like to encourage them that God wants to help them grow and that, while I could be wrong, I believe I see in them some measure of leadership gifting.

Pastors should consider it a primary responsibility of their ministry to make ways for new leaders to emerge. A wise leader warns that pastors ought not "raise the bar of qualification ever higher" so that it becomes increasingly difficult for new leadership to emerge. A pastor should continually be on the lookout for those he can train, and for opportunities to release those who can lead effectively.

The pastors I am privileged to serve with are vitally interested in equipping and releasing people into the ministry giftings God distributes by his Spirit.

For Further Study:

Read Exodus 3:10-11; 4:1,10,13. How did God transform this apparently faithless, reluctant man into one of the most dynamic leaders in history?

4 To become the holder of the world record in the high jump, you must be able to clear a height of more than eight feet. What was the standard at the first modern Olympic Games in 1896?

To become the winning driver of the Indy 500, you must maintain an average speed of more than 160 mph. What was the standard at the first Indy 500 in 1911?

To become a small-group leader in a local church, you must meet the criteria set forth in Scripture. What was the standard in 200 A.D.?

(See answer key at page 86.)

Answers:

- 6 feet, 5 and 5/8 inches.
- 75 mph.
- The same criteria set forth in Scripture (for specifics, see Chapter Four).

“Instead of monopolizing ministry himself,” writes John Stott of the pastor, “he actually multiplies ministries.”³ It is through this process of training and releasing that the church will be built and people brought to maturity.

A local church that does not train and release new leaders will be less effective. Small-group leaders are essential to the life of a church. There is simply no way a pastor or even a pastoral team can, by themselves, effectively care for all the people in a growing church. The Holy Spirit is faithful to distribute gifts of leadership, wisdom, mercy, discernment, etc., to individuals in the church to help provide care for *all* his people. It is a joy to watch spiritual gifts flourish as someone embraces the challenge of leading a small group. It is a joy to see the pastoral ministry multiplied through the formation of new groups.

Small Groups—Reaching Our World

Small groups can also be an extremely effective tool for reaching the lost. Evangelism ought to be on the priority list of every small group. While it is imperative to pursue progressive sanctification and mutual care, we dare not lose sight of Christ’s command to reach our world with the gospel.

Much of today’s small-group literature, however, takes an either/or approach—suggesting that small groups can choose to focus on sanctification *or* evangelism, but not both. Yet it is not only possible to do both, God has told us to do both (see Matthew 28:18-20).

I find it fascinating to watch new Christians get involved in the church. They still know more unbelievers

“ The test of a congregation, apart from personal holiness, is how effectively members penetrate the world. American churches are filled with pew-sitting, sermon-tasting, spiritual schizophrenics, whose belief and behavior are not congruent.⁴

”
— Bill Hull

than they do Christians, so it’s often quite easy for them to reach out effectively to their unsaved friends. They simply invite their non-Christian friends to their new church home and, amazingly, the friends come.

Jesus didn’t hesitate to befriend sinners, and it worked then, too. When

Jesus called Matthew the tax collector to follow him, Matthew invited many of his tax-collector buddies to join him for dinner with Jesus and the disciples (Mt 9:9-13),

Meditate on John 4:35. The “fields” of your community are ripe for harvest!

Meditate on 2 Corinthians 2:14-16; 3:5. God knows exactly whom he will draw to your small group, and he wants your life to attract them to truth.

and Jesus came to be known as the friend of tax collectors and sinners.

I have fond memories of leading small groups that had this sort of opportunity. New believers came in, and suddenly our group was meeting people and ministering in circles to which, previously, we had had no access. We presented the gospel to unsaved (now “ex-”) boyfriends and girlfriends, co-workers, friends, and family members. We got to perform bathtub baptisms, help young Christians grow, cry out often for wisdom, and experience the joy of transformed lives in a growing small group. *Let this dynamic work for your group...and make way for the newcomers! They are a harvest if you will put in the sickle.*

Indeed, there is no reason why a small group cannot maintain a dynamic of mutual care *and* spiritual growth, even while pursuing evangelistic outreach. Here are some ideas that we have implemented in an effort to begin to reach our community. These activities are not evangelism *per se*—because evangelism is nothing less than the clear and specific presentation of the gospel of Jesus Christ and his finished work on the Cross—but they can lay the groundwork for evangelism by presenting tangible demonstrations of the love of God.

We encourage reaching out to neighbors through service. This means being aware of needs in our neighborhoods and seeking to meet them. Our small groups regularly wash cars for free at a busy local restaurant on *S a t u r d a y s*. It’s a great way to serve and get to know people.

Some of the groups have hosted “free garage sales” in their neighborhood. (No junk allowed!) Many church members have testified of significant “death-to-self” experiences as they watch another group member bringing something to be given away which is just what they want or need! Sorry, the customers come first...The “free sales” naturally raise some eyebrows and generate lots of questions. This gives the hosts a chance to explain their

““ People of all kinds come when they have been truly welcomed. But Christ’s welcome cannot have a reservation. A smile in the sanctuary is not enough; we must be willing to welcome them into our homes, ””
too.⁵

— C. John Miller

motive—to communicate the love of God in a practical way. Conversations like these can lead easily to an invitation to a church meeting, or to a presentation of the gospel.

Two groups had the “bright” idea of a light bulb give-away, and joined forces to make the load “lighter.”

PIONEER OR SETTLER?

A Testimony

When God brings change into my life, my natural response is to resist it. So God puts me in situations where I simply have to adjust.

Last year our pastors decided to multiply our small group. I wanted to stay with my original group. I had been with these same people for six years and had worked through many personal issues with the group's leader. Our group had developed good relationships, new Christians had brought fresh zeal for what God was doing, and the leader was skilled in the Word. I felt I had found my place there.

I talked with church leadership about which group I should be in. They encouraged me that I could add value to either group.

I remembered a challenge from a message I'd heard years earlier: Would I be a pioneer or a settler? As I took that exhortation to heart, God removed my fear of change and replaced it with excitement for the new group I could participate in under new leadership.

I'm glad God did that for me, because this year our small group multiplied and now I'm in yet another one! I've learned that when God adds new groups, it's to bless others and to equip us for carrying out God's mission. I struggled with the idea of change until I realized that God is the God of change. We're resisting him when we don't receive his direction with a grateful and expectant heart.

— **Troy Garner (Morton, PA)**

Groups have also done free gift-wrapping at Christmas, yard work, and drink give-aways. These are just a few ideas.

We also encourage everyone in our church to reach out to "one life." Many people in our church ask God to show them at least one person to pray for and build a relationship with during the year. The idea is not to set limits on us, but to provide a tangible and easily identifiable goal. It is exciting to watch doors open for the gospel to go forth in families, neighborhoods, and workplaces. It is great to know that small groups as a whole are supporting the individual members as they reach out to "one life." The encouragement, prayer, and accountability available in a small group make a huge difference. As the efforts bear fruit, small groups rally around new Christians with care and encouragement. In these and other ways, God is challenging our church to believe him for greater evangelistic effectiveness.

The Sum of the Parts

Through my involvement as a small-group leader and pastor over the years, I have

seen first-hand that the small-group structure has much to do with a church's level of success. This truth does not minimize the importance of doctrine, worship, effective pastoring, or evangelism. But the role of the small group is unique—it represents the practical application of a church's beliefs. Generally, people can only be made an

integral part of a church through their small-group involvement; it is rare for this process to be accomplished through Sunday- morning meetings alone.

For a church to be strong and continuing to mature, the members must become wholeheartedly involved in their small group. They must be determined not to plateau or get comfortable with the status quo. Like a mother bird who knows when to push her chicks toward the edge of the nest, God does not want us to stay as we are. He is faithful to challenge us to take that next step of faith.

As individuals, the challenge may be to greater levels of service or evangelism. When a church grows numerically (which is always part of God's intention), small groups may be challenged to release leaders to move into a new phase of ministry; release long-standing members to lead new groups; embrace new members or leaders; or re-form into completely new groups. It is at these times that we find out what we truly believe—whether our vision is for the growth and progress of the church or simply the preservation of our own comfort.

By viewing our small-group involvement in the context of a larger mission and purpose—that of the local church—we keep a proper perspective. Let's determine to pursue the purpose of small groups without hesitation or reluctance of any kind. Doing this involves welcoming and making room for new people, actively caring for one another, creatively reaching out with the gospel, and gladly releasing new leaders and new groups to serve the church effectively. In other words, it means ...

... Never say "comfortable"! ■

GROUP DISCUSSION

1. In this chapter, "koinonitis" is compared to termites eating away homes from the inside out. What does koinonitis "eat away at" inside us?
2. Do you have memories of attending a meeting and feeling like an outsider? What could someone have done to make you feel more welcome?
3. How "visitor-friendly" is your group? Can you think of ways to improve?

4. Does the thought of your group expanding (and eventually multiplying) excite you? Or tempt you to be anxious?
5. Based on the gifts you see in your group, who would you pick as “Most Likely to Lead a New Group?”
6. Have you ever been in a “small” group that was too big for its own good? What positive qualities are lost when a group gets too large?
7. Can you describe a particular time in which God wanted to push you “out of the nest” although you felt you weren’t ready to fly? Any areas now in which God is encouraging you to take a step of faith?

RECOMMENDED READING *How to Give Away Your Faith* by Paul Little (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1989)

The Soul Winner by Charles Spurgeon (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 1995)

More Than a Carpenter by Josh McDowell (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1987)

Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life by Donald Whitney (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1997)

NOTES

1. Charles Bridges, *The Christian Ministry* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1991), pp. 129-130.
2. Jerry Bridges, *The Crisis of Caring* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1985), p. 173.
3. John R.W. Stott, *The Message of Ephesians* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), p. 167.
4. Bill Hull, *The Disciple-Making Pastor* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1988), p. 20.
5. C. John Miller, *Powerful Evangelism for the Powerless* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1997) *e Peacemaker*, p. 97.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 164.