

# “Sticky Church” Model Summary

## Larry Osborne

---

The Sticky Church model seeks to “close the back door” of the Church by helping people already in the pews mature in their faith and retain more people who come to the Church. This model proposes the use of “sermon-based” small groups in order to do so.

At the heart of this model is the belief that spiritual growth is non-linear, time consuming, and most effectively accomplished as we live. In other words, we don’t just grow by taking a series of classes, like arithmetic to algebra. We grow as we live. We apply the truths and resources that we have as life makes it necessary. And we also learn to apply these truths and resources with people, either people who advise us in our need or people whose lives serve as an example for us.

If we grow best by living life with others, then the two things we really need for growth are the Bible and other Christians. Hence, the Discipleship Group. The Discipleship Group is a place to foster honesty and transparency, and a place to learn how to apply the Bible and practice spiritual disciplines. To a certain extent, the curriculum in the small group is not as critical as the relationships in the small group. Within each meeting, three types of questions need to be addressed: those that foster relationships, those that take us into the Bible, and those that encourage us to apply the Bible together. These are the elements that give members the needed ingredients for growth: the Bible and other Christians.

These deep, Christian relationships become the “sticky” factor in the Church. In small groups, we stick to each other as we all seek to stick to Jesus.

The curriculum chosen for Discipleship Groups is a “sermon-based” curriculum that runs in seasons of no more than ten weeks. This encourages a different kind of engagement on Sunday mornings during the sermon because Discipleship Group members know that they will be having a follow-up conversation about the homework based on the sermon material. This helps people pay more attention and take more notes, and also allows deeper learning as they approach the material in several different ways. Not only that, this curriculum brings unity to the larger body as the majority of people are “learning in the same direction.”

Because relationships are so important, we do not want to divide groups. If a group “gels” we want to continue fostering that group. Instead, we will seed the formation of new groups by raising up recommended leaders. During the course of each study, the Discipleship Group Coordinator will ask

each Group Leader to recommend any individuals or couples who might show evidence of making a good Group Leader. Most evidence shows that groups composed of couples find their right size around 12-14 members and groups of singles find their right size around 8-12 people.

We also want to give people the ability to “opt-out” with ease. Having a way out encourages greater initial participation. Studies will be conducted in “Seasons” of more than 10 weeks so that people are not being asked to make life-long commitments to a group. The first three weeks of the group are a trial. If new participants don’t feel comfortable continuing, they can leave in the first three weeks guilt free. After that, they are expected to complete the ten weeks. At the end of each teaching, group members will be asked to participate in an evaluation which concludes with three options: I will continue with this group, I will take a break from groups, I would like to try another group.

Groups will be expected to engage in at least one service project each year and one social gathering each quarter. There will be natural breaks in the calendar to avoid becoming too busy. Teaching series will follow the liturgical calendar: Late Pentecost (Sept. – Nov.), Epiphany (Jan.-Lent) and Easter (~Apr.-May). Groups will break for Advent/Christmas (Dec.), Lent (for Lenten Teachings), and Early Pentecost (Summer). Discipleship Group Leaders and Hosts will be expected to attend two Training Events each year: Fall Kickoff and Winter.