

CHAMPION GROUPWORDS

The Bible teaches that spiritual gifts are given for the common good of the body of Christ. When those gifts are opened and put to use they become a blessing to everyone. But to not open them is like walking by a Christmas tree and leaving all the presents wrapped. Unopened, they are never experienced and never enjoyed.

One purpose of our small group ministry is to help Christians open and use the gifts God has given them. In fact, the small setting of a group makes this that much easier. Brett Eastman, CEO of Lifetogether, offers the acronym (**CHAMPION**). I have adapted it to speak to our Small Group Ministry.

- C ... CELEBRATE** every member's spiritual gift. While everybody is blessed with abilities and skills, an individual understands their unique God-given gift when they trust Christ with their lives. God uses circles of friends — the body of Christ — to affirm and help develop those particular gifts. If we don't create an atmosphere for our small group members to receive feedback, we may be leaving a package wrapped up with a nice little bow on it. Take the package, open it up, and allow people to see. Help them identify and develop their spiritual gifts.
- H ... HAVE** every member take a small step toward using his or her gifts. Our groups are the smallest form of the body of Christ. Within each group, there are enough gifts to accomplish exactly what God wants. His dream is for all of us to get in the game. Try to assign a role or responsibility to everyone in the group. Do this regardless of where they're at in their spiritual journey; just get them moving in an area where they think their gifts are. These are opportunities to get them in the game.
- A ... AFFIRM** every individual's gift and every step he or she takes in ministry. No matter what steps they take, you and your group should be affirming and encouraging. Ask the group, “Hey guys, wasn't that fantastic?” No matter what they did, thank them.
- M ... MOTIVATE** every member to develop their God-given shape for life. One way to do this is to ask for ideas? Fill a whiteboard with ideas and tasks, and then ask, “Who is gifted to fill these individual roles?” When they raise their hand and offer themselves ask, “Who would you like to join you in accomplishing this particular goal?” They'll proceed to give names of individuals who they enjoy hanging with. One turn deserves another, so rotate the responsibilities regularly so that your group members can do something different (but still work together). This won't happen overnight but dream to have this happen over time.
- P ... PUT** them into teams in order to mobilize everyone. Jesus didn't send out his disciples alone; he sent them out in pairs. Use the power of pairs to accomplish tasks. If you have people at different spiritual levels — one is a new Christian and one is a long-time believer — pair them together. This makes the new believer feel safe and empowers them to accomplish something they would never do on their own. It also provides accountability.

- I ... **INSPIRE** your members with shared examples and stories. Talk about times when you or others were reluctant to lead but were pushed to lead anyway. This is your chance to show how God uses all people with various gifts — regardless of whether they feel prepared or not.
- O ... **OFFER** open discussion about serving together. Ask your group, “What can we do together?” Don't just tell them what you're going to do as a group; instead, involve them in determining what to do and where you think God is calling them to go.
- N ... **NEVER** give up. When we feel wobbly, remember that Hebrews 13:7 says He will never leave us. He will never forsake us. He will never leave us unable to grow and go to the next level in our gifts. Be steadfast; be immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil in the Lord is not in vain. It is for a great measure and a great cause (2 Corinthians 15:58).

CHAMPION the gifts of your group members by helping them to discover and utilize them. May God bless our Small Group Ministry here at Prestoncrest.

Because of a Cross,
Bob