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ARTICLE

The Age of One to Many Is Over — And Small Group Ministry Needs a Rethink

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The age of broadcasting is over.

In marketing, the evidence is clear: **mass messages get ignored, but targeted ones get traction.** Personalization boosts email open rates by **188%** compared to generic messages. And even in politics — one of the hardest arenas to move people — crafting a message targeted to just one attribute (like party or belief) is **70% more effective** than a one-size-fits-all approach, according to a **MIT study**.

Across industries, we're watching a massive shift unfold — from **mass to micro**, from "talking at everyone" to "speaking to exactly who needs to hear." The winning stories of this

decade will be those that are targeted, contextual, and relational — not generalized megaphones shouting into the void.

And yet, the Church, the greatest movement in human history, still relies primarily on one-to-many messaging.

Sunday Is Sunday — But What About Everything Else?

Let's assume for a moment that Sunday morning isn't changing anytime soon. It's locked in, and for

good reason. Gathering weekly as the people of God to worship, learn, and be formed together is vital.

But if Sunday is the first chapter of the Church's communication strategy, small group ministry is the second. And that's where we have a problem.

Because right now, small group ministry is broken.

What started with energy and momentum in the early 2000s has stalled. And "reinvention" too often amounts to new names, slightly tweaked language, and incremental thinking.

Groundbreaking research isn't all that groundbreaking.

The reality is, the model hasn't kept pace with the world we now live in, a world defined by microtargeting, personalization, and affinity-based communities.

A Recruiting Problem, Not a Programming Problem?

In sports, shifting momentum often starts with **recruiting**. You can't win if you're not attracting the right people. The same is true in the Church.

We don't have a small group content problem. We have a small group *recruiting* problem. And more specifically, we have a **small group assimilation problem**.

The way we currently invite people into community often doesn't match how people are wired to connect.

Entrepreneurs, for example, disengage from groups that don't "get" them. They're wired to solve problems, take risks, and build. If a group doesn't speak their language or share their challenges, they drift away.

The same is true in the business world. Even CEO peer groups lose members when real understanding is missing. It's not about ego. It's about *accelerated connection*.

From One-to-Many to Affinity-Driven Communities

The future of small groups won't be built on one-to-many broadcasts. It will be built on **affinity-driven communities**, groups formed around shared life stages, common battles, and aligned callings.

We already see this model thriving in the Church. Programs like **Celebrate Recovery**, **Divorce Care**, and **Young Marrieds** don't exist because of demographics like zip codes or kids' ages. They exist because people rally around shared stories and shared struggles.

Faith Driven Entrepreneurs are no different.

They disengage from groups that don't understand their calling, but they come alive in spaces where others share the same mission, wrestle with the same questions, and carry the same burdens. They don't need to be convinced to care about their work. If anything, they often care too much. They just need a context that understands and channels that passion toward Kingdom purpose.

Time. The Case for Running Head Starts.

And if the case for **affinity** alone isn't enough, there's another reality we can't ignore: **time**.

Too often in the Church, instead of meeting people where they are, we ask them to climb the mountain and meet us where we want them to be. But the truth is, most of them can't make that climb — not because they don't care, but because they're already stretched thin.

Think about the average **28–45-year-old entrepreneur**. They're building a business, managing a team, making payroll. They're showing up at their kids' T-ball games and volleyball matches. They're trying, often failing, to carve out thirty minutes for a run or a workout. Their most precious resource isn't money. It's time. And they don't have much of it.

They also don't have what they once did — those endless late-night road trips or dorm-room conversations that forged lifelong friendships. Those moments are gone. What they do need are **running head starts** — opportunities that fit into the margins of real life and relationships that don't require months to earn trust.

They need people who *get them*, who understand the pressures of leading, the weight of responsibility, and the inner struggles that sound all too familiar. They need a community that starts where they are, speaks their language, and connects deeply and quickly.

The Opportunity in Front of Us

This is one of the **greatest opportunities for the Church in the next decade**.

The churches that figure this out — that move beyond “one-to-many” messaging and create space for **micro-targeted, affinity-based communities** — will build thriving ecosystems inside their larger congregations.

It's not an all-or-nothing proposition. Sunday services still matter. Traditional small groups still matter. But we need *more than that*.

We need to **make these kinds of groups available**. And if doing it across every domain feels overwhelming, that's okay. **Start with entrepreneurs.**

Why? Because they're already wired to build. They're already motivated. They already care deeply about their work and its impact. And they're often sitting in our pews wondering how to integrate their faith and their calling.

Here's the best part: **reach this group, and they may become the very ones who fund the ministry that reaches everyone else**. Entrepreneurs have the capacity not only to transform their own sphere, but also to resource work among educators, doctors, lawyers, and beyond. And we've worked hard to make it simple. We've created world-class tools, stories, studies, and content, designed to help you disciple and activate entrepreneurs in your church. No cost. No catch. Just powerful resources ready to use in your community.

And this isn't theory — it's already happening. More than 25,000 entrepreneurs have gone through the Faith Driven Entrepreneur study, and many are now leading and multiplying impact in their spheres of influence.

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The Next Chapter of Small Groups

The age of broadcasting is over. The future belongs to the focused.

The Church has a moment to reimagine what small groups can be — not just gatherings sorted by zip code or kids' ages, but affinity-driven communities that go deeper and grow stronger.

And as we enter this new era, one truth becomes clear: **one-to-many is not enough.**

The next chapter of small group ministry won't be about how loudly we shout, but how precisely we connect. It won't be about casting the widest net, but about weaving the strongest fabric — built from shared calling, shared mission, and shared purpose.

The future of discipleship is targeted.
The future of formation is relational.
The future of small groups is *micro*.

