

Faith and Vision—Key Ingredients to Effective Small Groups

By Bob Young

These are days of unlimited potential for the gospel of Jesus Christ, but it takes faithful, visionary men and women who are willing to be instruments in God's hand to seize the opportunities before us. What is the secret of building a great small group ministry to reach the multitudes of our cities? The difference between mediocrity (and failure) and greatness is not in the skill level of our leaders. It is not the amount of money spent—in fact, small group ministry will prove to be one of the least expensive evangelistic efforts ever undertaken in most congregations. Small group ministry will diminish the importance of the location of the building or the beauty of the facility. Small group ministry needs effective curriculum, but its success does not ultimately hinge on the latest teaching methodology or technology. The major determinant is in the answer to a question: are we people of faith and vision?

Robert Schuller made popular the concept of Possibility Thinking. He distinguished impossibility thinkers from possibility thinkers. Consider the follow summary:¹

“Impossibility thinkers make swift, sweeping passes over a proposed idea, scan it with a sharp, negative eye, and see only the problems. They look for reasons something won't work rather than visualizing the way it can be made to work. They can think of a dozen reasons why a thing can't be done. It doesn't take a sharp mind to do that. Impossibility thinkers consider themselves keep analysts. They are not keep analysts—they are people of little faith. They lack faith in God, faith in God's desire to bless them with needed resources, talents, and abilities, and faith in their fellow Christians. They are inclined to say “no” to a proposal without giving it a fair hearing. They immediately, instinctively, impetuously react to any positive suggestion with negative statements. This attitude produces doubt, stimulates fear, and generates a mental climate of pessimism and fatigue. The end result is dreams smashed and projects torpedoed. Our great need is for people who can think of reasons and find ways to get things done for God. When God gives us a job, he also empowers us to do it. He is not going to let us down. But he does want to see that we have what it takes to do our part. We must have the courage to make a beginning if we are going to be used by God to build great churches. He will see us through. There will always be problems. The size of the problem is usually in direct proportion to the size of the dream. You can measure a person and a congregation by the size of the dream and by the size of the problem it takes to get one down. We must think in faith and with vision if we are to build great, growing churches for god. When we develop the vision and faith for the task, God will bless that effort. Nothing is impossible with God. Possibility thinkers find great opportunities—usually in the most unlikely places. They perceptively probe every problem, proposal, and opportunity to discover the positive aspects. When faced with a mountain, they go on. They either climb over, dig through, tunnel under, or stay put and work to turn the mountain into a gold mine.”

¹ As cited in *Personal Evangelism* magazine.

God has faith in us to do the job. The task of carrying the gospel to the world has been entrusted to the people of God. God has no other plan. I am embarrassed when others, whom many of us would consider in doctrinal error, have greater faith and greater vision for the task than do we. I am not addressing inappropriate means or methods that go beyond what is written. I am asking if we are really committed to being the people of God and doing the will of God, or if we are content to “be right” in our thinking while ignoring God’s call to action. Faith always acts. Let us recommit ourselves to being people of faith.