


7 Deadly Sins of Small Group Ministry

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The 7 deadly sins is a familiar idea. And originally, the 7 sins referred to were actual *sins* and supposedly unforgivable. So are there 7 deadly sins of small group ministry? And are they unforgivable?

I believe there are at least 7 deadly sins of small group ministry. I also believe they are forgivable, but there is a consequence. In this case the consequences almost always affect unconnected people, group leaders and group members.

The 7 Deadly Sins of Small Group Ministry

1. Allowing the Senior Pastor to delegate the champion role

Allowing the Senior Pastor to delegate the champion role (to the small group pastor). While one of the seven deadlies may not seem worse than another, this is an especially egregious sin.

Small group ministries have the greatest potential to thrive when the senior pastor owns the champion role. When the senior pastor delegates or deflects the role to anyone else, maintaining the status quo feels like progress. It feels like a win just to find replacement

leaders for the leaders who tell you they're taking a break and it feels like success when new small group members join replacing those that dropped out. Treading water feels like a win.

When the senior pastor delegates or deflects the role to anyone else, maintaining the status quo feels like progress. Click To Tweet

See also, TOP 5 THINGS EVERY SENIOR PASTOR NEEDS TO KNOW ABOUT SMALL GROUP MINISTRY

2. Small group pastor not sharing the care and development load.

Small group pastor not sharing the care and development load. Another especially egregious sin, holding onto the role of caring for and developing group leaders leads to inadequate care and nonexistent development.

Jethro's admonishment to Moses (Exodus 18) offers a clear example and pattern for developing healthy span of care. As the number of groups and leaders grow, small group pastors must focus sufficient time and energy on identifying, recruiting and developing leaders of leaders (coaches). When this doesn't become a high priority small group ministries remain stuck and growth in the number of leaders and groups is limited.

The effects of intentionally holding onto the care and development load (because no one else can do it) are the same as unintentionally holding on (not realizing the importance of span of care). In both cases leaders are poorly cared for leading to a dying or dead group.

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See also, 4 Essential Skills Most New Small Group Pastors Need to Develop.

3. Paying too much attention to the needs and interests of existing group leaders and members.

Paying too much attention to the needs and interests of existing group leaders and members. The two most recognizable indications of this sin are (a) when excess attention is paid to the curriculum and topic interests of "mature" believers and, (b) when requests for replacement members become expected and commonplace.

Healthy small group ministries prioritize the launch of new groups and train leaders and members to "fish for themselves" (learn to personally invite potential members to join the group). Curriculum and topic interests take a backseat when necessary to the needs and

interests of unconnected people.

See also, [Critical Decision: Add Members to Existing Groups vs. Start New Groups?](#) and [4 SURMOUNTABLE CHALLENGES FACING MANY SMALL GROUP MINISTRIES](#).

4. Not prioritizing the launch of *new* groups.

Not prioritizing the launch of *new* groups. This sin is most common when groups are emphasized annually (i.e., "our fall groups launch") and take a backseat the rest of the year.

The impact and effects of this sin can be diminished when a year-round strategy is adopted and a model employed that makes it easy and common for new leaders to be identified and new groups to form.

This sin is also very common when the small group model emphasizes the maintenance of existing groups (as in an incorrectly designed semester model). Small group ministries plateau when supporting (and restocking) existing groups takes priority over the launch of new groups.

[Small group ministries plateau when supporting \(and restocking\) existing groups takes priority over the launch of new groups. Click To Tweet](#)

See also, [Are You Prioritizing the Launch of New Groups?](#)

5. Lack of concern for unconnected people.

Lack of concern for unconnected people. This sin is most common in churches on a hunt for a problem-free solution or without any sense of urgency. Believing the situation will be better next season or next year, these churches are content to wait until all their ducks are in a row.

Developing a keen sense of urgency about the regularly closing windows of unconnected people will fight the impact of this sin. Paying closer attention to the stories of unconnected people in the crowd will help grow a greater willingness to steward every season.

Growing churches and thriving small group ministries develop a keen sense of urgency about the regularly closing windows of unconnected people.

[Growing churches and thriving small group ministries develop a keen sense of urgency about the regularly closing windows of unconnected people. Click To Tweet](#)

See also, [What's Your Urgency Level for Connecting Unconnected People?](#)

6. Not caring for or developing leaders after they are recruited.

Not caring for or developing leaders after they are recruited. This sin is very common in churches and small group ministries offering/allowing too many ministries or programs. The constant need to recruit for, prepare for and promote the next thing (and the thing after that) makes negligence in the most strategic areas commonplace.

Keeping your eye on the most strategic things becomes more and more difficult the more additional ministries and programs are offered. Not caring for and developing small group leaders and coaches is often the resulting sin of saying yes to everything.

[Not caring for and developing small group leaders and coaches is often the resulting sin of saying yes to everything. Click To Tweet](#)

See also, [7 Things You Must Do TO and FOR Your Small Group Leaders.](#)

7. Settling for fellowship and not making better disciples.

Settling for fellowship and not making better disciples. When most effective, small groups offer fellowship *and* discipleship. When they settle for either, they miss the mark. Groups strategies that settle for fellowship and offer a discipleship program alongside (or vice versa) commonly offer less than the optimal environment for life-change and miss the truly transformational impact of a thriving small group ministry.

Offering both fellowship and discipleship in a group requires a leader who is being cared for and developed by someone who has already been there (i.e., you can't take anyone somewhere you have never been). Settling for fellowship is commonly the result of another of the 7 deadlies of small group ministry.

[Offering both fellowship and discipleship in a group requires a leader who is being cared for and developed by someone who has already been there Click To Tweet](#)

See also, [Would You Rather: Connect More People or Make More Disciples?](#)