



Getting everyone to serve in your small groups

by Steve Gladen

Have you ever been playing basketball and had someone take the ball inbounds, dribble it down the court, and shoot it without ever passing the ball? We have a word for people like that – ball hogs! They never work within a team environment. They play for themselves.

I know many small group leaders who are ministry hogs. They want to do all of the ministry of the small group without sharing it.

The Bible says, "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds" (Heb. 10:24 NIV).

Your challenge as a church leader is to help people get out of their comfort zones and see that God wants to use them in ministry. I love this quote: "People grow the most when they are serving and taking responsibility. Every task, no matter how small, is an opportunity to serve."

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If you can help the people in your small groups taste service in a small way, it'll change their lives forever. But you've got to get the ball in their hands from time to time to do that.

Ask Jake Porter what it meant to him to get the ball in his hands. Jake was born with a mental disorder called Fragile X, which prevented him from playing football on a regular basis. But Jake loved football. He dutifully came to practice and served as the team manager every day, even though he didn't get to play.

On the last day of his senior season, his coach decided to get him in the game if at all possible. He even told the opposing coach the plan. If they were up by a large amount, they'd put Jake in so he could kneel and run out the clock. The other coach gladly agreed. But when Jake's team was down 42-0 during the game, the other coach threw a monkey wrench into the plan. He told his players not to tackle Jake when he got the ball, but to let him score a touchdown. And that's exactly what happened. When Jake got the ball, the other team just let him score. Jake was on top of the world.

How many Jake Porters are in your small groups? How many touchdowns don't get scored because we never give the ball to them? That's why shared leadership is such an important part of how we do small groups at Saddleback. We want to get people the ball and into the game.

How do we share leadership in our small groups? We encourage our small group leaders to let different people in the group take the lead in helping the group live out the purposes of the church (worship, fellowship, discipleship, ministry, and evangelism). Our small group leaders appoint different people to be "purpose champions."

Here are some of the things different purpose champions are responsible for:

- The **worship champion** may lead the singing in the group, pick songs for the meeting, or delegate these tasks to others. This person may also oversee the prayer ministry of the group, lead in Scripture reading, or oversee other similar activities.
- The **fellowship champion** usually coordinates meals or refreshments for group gatherings. This person may also be responsible for organizing celebrations or parties (such as Christmas or birthday parties) or planning other social activities.

- The **discipleship champion** helps ensure that the group has a balanced spiritual diet and encourages group members to take a periodic spiritual health assessment and develop a personal health plan. This person may also help the group members partner up for one-on-one accountability relationships, as well as grow deeper in the spiritual disciplines.
- The **ministry champion** helps the group find opportunities to serve together within the church. The ministry champion also coordinates meals and support for group members in crisis (sickness, death in the family, new child, etc.).
- The **evangelism champion** oversees the outreach plans of the small group and helps the group participate in missions projects.

Developing purpose champions in your small groups does two things. First, it helps your groups become more balanced and healthy because you'll have people focused on each of the purposes. Small groups have a tendency to drift toward one or two of the purposes (often fellowship or discipleship) if there aren't people passionate enough about the other purposes to balance the group.

Also, developing purpose champions helps you get people in the game who may never have had an opportunity otherwise. Instead of one leader who dominates the group, you'll have five leaders who are all being challenged with the responsibility of leadership.

So, don't let your small group leaders become ball hogs. Get everyone in the game and watch as new leaders emerge.

More Resources

For some help training small group leaders and potential purpose champions in this model, check out the resource, [Don't Lead Alone](#).

For more information on growing purpose driven small groups, check out the [2008 Purpose Driven Small Group Conference](#), Feb. 20-22.



Article by Steve Gladen

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