



MAXIMIZING

The Impact of the Town and Country Church

1. The small town and country church is the right size

Churches that met in houses

Jerusalem (Acts 2:42ff.)

Rome (Romans 16:5)

Corinth (1 Corinthians 16:19)

Colossae (Colossians 4:15, Philemon 2)

Laodicea (Colossians 4:15)



1. The small town and country church is the right size

“Small churches are the right size to be and do all that God calls a church to be and do.”

-- David Ray



Colossians

1:9 – “For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding.”

1:19 – “For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him [Christ].”

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Colossians

1:25 – “I have become its [the church’s] servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness.”

1:28 – “We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ.” [perfect = full-grown, complete, mature]

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Colossians

2:2 – “My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding.”

2:9-10 – “For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ.”

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1. The small town and country church is the right size

Every biblical purpose for the church can be fulfilled just as well in a small church as in a large church.



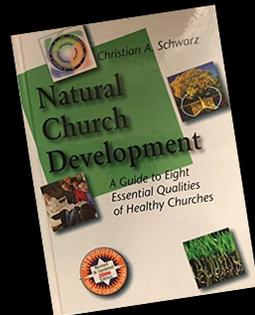
1. The small town and country church is the right size

There is no evidence that folks in small churches are more limited in their potential to become mature believers.



1. The small town and country church is the right size

“Those familiar with church growth literature regularly encounter the names of a number of large churches which are held up as models to be imitated. The presupposition is that *large* churches are by definition *good* churches. Is this thesis tenable? Our research revealed for the first time that the opposite is probably true.”



-- Christian Schwarz

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1. The small town and country church is the right size

“On nearly all relevant quality factors, large churches compare unfavorably with smaller ones. In fact, the one exception is inspiring worship service.”

-- Christian Schwarz



1. The small town and country church is the right size

“We proclaim Him...that we may present everyone complete in Christ.”

-- Colossians 1:28



Laying the Foundation for Strengths-Based Ministry

- 1. The small town and country church is the right size**
- 2. The small town and country church is unique**



Perhaps the most noteworthy strength of a healthy small church is that it is personal and relational.

Biblical validation

- The two greatest commands: love God; love others
- The “one anothers” of the New Testament
- The commendation for the small church at Colossae (1:4)
- The plethora of relational texts in the New Testament
- Our Lord’s example
- The church, a family
- The Trinity: Father, Son, Holy Spirit



From Strength to Strengths

Relational Commands in Scripture – a Sampling

Live in harmony with one another...love your neighbor as yourself...pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding...Let each of us please his neighbor for his good...Thus, sinning against your brothers and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ...have the same care for one another...Aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace...If you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another... Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you...Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another...walk in love, as Christ loved us...Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves...and may the Lord make you increase and abound in love...the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone...speak evil of no one, avoid quarreling, be gentle, and show perfect courtesy toward all... Let brotherly love continue...the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere...Do not speak evil against one another... have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. Do not repay evil for evil...keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins...let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.

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From Strength to Strengths

Perhaps the most noteworthy strength of a healthy small church is that it is personal and relational.

“A small church is a church in which everybody knows everybody else and wants to.”

-- Carl Dudley



From Strength to Strengths

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“In a small church I will probably never be driven to my knees by architectural splendor...I will probably never be stirred by the power and majesty of the music...the unison singing of hundreds of worshipers; I will probably never encounter preaching that overwhelms...and I will never have the assurance of being a part of a mass movement, which is possible in large churches. However, in a small church I can experience a sense of family and community.”

-- David Ray

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Leveraging the Most Notable Strength Times Four

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Maximizing this relational strength

- 1 Focus on personal relationships more than quantity of relationships

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Biblical validation

- The lost sheep (Matthew 18:10-14)
- The Good Shepherd (John 10:1-18)

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Perhaps the most noteworthy strength of a healthy small church is that it is personal and relational.

Maximizing this relational strength

- 2 Be intentional about making intergenerational relationships a centerpiece of your church's ministry

Word picture used often in the Bible: Family

- Mother, brother, sister, son, household, older and younger, etc.

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Leveraging the Most Notable Strength Times Four

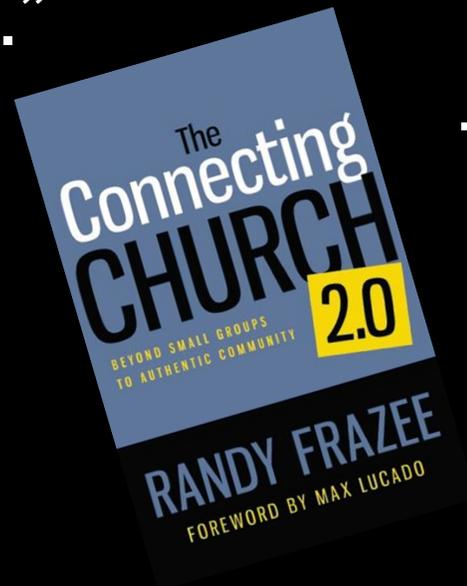
“I learned from him [a mentor in Aaron’s life] that authentic ministry is intergenerational. He taught me that the church is at its best when the young and the old are integrated throughout the life of the congregation. Seniors must remember what it was like to be young, and the young must remember that they may one day become seniors. Therefore we must be patient with one another. If we have a contemporary service for the young and a traditional for seniors, we teach the young and the old to be intolerant of one another. We are bordering on ageism. The young and the old must come side by side with each other and minister to the glory of God together.”

-- Aaron Williams

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Leveraging the Most Notable Strength Times Four

“Many church leaders still believe that the most effective grouping of people is centered around the sharing of a common life-stage experience. While it may be the fastest way to grow a group of people numerically, it is not going to produce the best qualitative results in the lives of individuals.”



-- Randy Frazee

MAXIMIZING

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Applications

- Worship services
- Children's and youth ministries



Leveraging the Most Notable Strength Times Four

“Teenagers who experience only the youth group and never bond with others in the church are almost guaranteed to drop out [of church] after high school. If it’s only the youth group that drew them, then only the youth group can hold them. No more youth group, no more kids. That’s why I worked so hard to get our megachurch kids interacting with the rest of the church. But it was nigh unto impossible. Large churches tend to have an age-division paradigm that controls everything.”

Dave McClellan

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Maximizing this relational strength

- 3** Emphasize the advantages of relating with people from all walks of life and encourage your congregation to be purposeful about doing it

Applications

- People with special needs
- People struggling with addictions
- Singles



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Maximizing this relational strength

- 3 Emphasize the advantages of relating with people from all walks of life and encourage your congregation to be purposeful about doing it

“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

-- Galatians 3:27-28

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Maximizing this relational strength

4 Design the worship services to reflect the relational bent of the congregation

- Welcome, greeting, announcements
- Prayer
- Music
- Preaching



Leveraging the Most Notable Strength Times Four

“I was thinking one day of a painter... ‘Wait,’ I said, ‘I need more colors than that.’ ...Then God, our art instructor, says, ‘I’ve given you all you need to portray Christ through your church. **Just paint with the colors I gave you.**’ ...Instead of trying to be contemporary, blended, or traditional in worship, we try to be us... Many churches choose their worship style and music in order to appeal to the kinds of people they want to draw. Many use only their best musicians. I get that. But we have decided not to do it that way. We decided that, whenever we can, we will use the people God gives us, as many of them as possible, regardless of whether they play a bass or a bassoon.”

Lee Eclov

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Leveraging the Most Notable Strength Times Six

“I didn’t coin the phrase, but in the church I serve we often operate according to the ‘good enough’ principle. It’s natural to assume that the talent pool is smaller in smaller churches. As a result, members of smaller churches with average (or even below average) talent often have opportunities to participate in public worship and ministry in ways that would be denied them in larger churches. This doesn’t mean we shouldn’t strive for excellence in all we do, but it does mean that in the smaller church, a genuine heart and a willingness to serve are often valued above skill level and professional presentation. In addition, folks in smaller churches are notorious for their tolerance. Those who lead and serve even with modest abilities in the smaller church can expect to be loved, accepted, and encouraged.”

-- Shawn McMullen

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