

The Power of Testimony

Make sure to take advantage of this powerful tool when promoting small groups.

Mark Howell

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When it comes to promoting small-group ministry opportunities, nothing comes close to the power of personal testimony (live or video). While that statement might not be a mystery, most churches end up focusing on the least effective promotion when it comes time to recruit new leaders and members.

In the great hierarchy of marketing effectiveness, the least effective is print, which I've lumped all together—bulletins, newsletters, e-newsletters, websites, and so on. Only slightly better is verbal announcement supported by a handout. Still better is for the senior pastor to talk about the opportunity as part of the message.

And the most effective method is for the pastor to refer to a video or introduce a live testimony.

The Basics

Many people feel intimidated by the idea of putting together a live or video testimony on the power of small groups, but it's really pretty simple.

First, recruit people for the video (or live testimony) who have compelling answers to the following questions:

1. What were you afraid of when you were considering joining a small group?
2. What do you sense God has done in your life as a result of being in the small group?
3. What would you say to the people who are still thinking about whether they should join a group?

Sometimes I'll add in this fourth question if the situation feels right: "Can you imagine not being involved with your small group?"

If you're looking for a testimony to specifically attract group leaders or hosts, you can make a very simple tweak:

1. What were you afraid of when you were considering leading a small group?
2. What do you sense God has done in your group?
3. What would you say to the people who are still thinking about whether they should lead a group?

Tips for Planning and Filming

In my experience, a good testimony (video or live) should be about 2.5 minutes long. If you're using video, it's best to string together 10 or 12 short clips instead of trying to get someone to do

everything correctly in one take. And the creative use of a soundtrack and graphics can really be effective.

I also think it works well to have the video only show the interviewee, not the interviewer. For this to work, you'll need to have the interviewees answer with a form of the question. For example, "When I was thinking about hosting a group, I was afraid because I didn't know much about the Bible."

As you film the video, don't be afraid to yell "Cut!" and ask the question again or ask the interviewee to shorten it up. (You don't have to actually yell, I guess.) It is much more compelling when the video is tighter. Long answers are death, so keep it short.

If the testimony is written and will be delivered live, be sure to have the person practice reading it before he or she gets in front of the congregation. The key is "once more with feeling!"

Tips on Timing

The very best place to add video is *during* the message from your pastor. There are two main reasons for this:

1. You have the best chance of maintaining everyone's attention during the message. You're only kidding yourself if you think that people are paying attention during the announcements (no matter if they come at the beginning or end of the service). But if your pastor says "Just watch this video" or "Please welcome Bob and Sue," people are more likely to be paying attention.
2. Video or live testimony often adds an emotional element that is missing from many sermons. Although there are some speakers that can deliver the full range of emotion in their messages (John Ortberg comes to mind), this is not true of everyone. Many are much more adept at using humor to spice up their sermon delivery. Unfortunately, humor will not work as a recruiting device. A video or testimony featuring real people and real emotions is much more effective.

--Over the last 20+ years, Mark has served as the Groups Pastor at a number of the largest and fastest growing churches in America. He's the founder of MarkHowellLive.com, offering consulting and coaching services that help churches launch, build and sustain healthy small group ministries. Article excerpted with permission from his blog.