

# Skill Training: Sub-Grouping for Deeper Connection and Wider Disciple-Making

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“My group members don’t want to sub-group!”

“We’d really rather stay together.”

“We don’t want to miss out on what anyone says.”

If you’ve heard any of these lines (or said them yourselves), you’re normal.

If you’ve given into the temptation to stay in a circle of 12 (or anything larger than 3 or 4) for your entire meeting, you’re missing out on a key element of life-on-life ministry.

Why? As tempting as staying together for the whole meeting might be, it fails to take into consideration the reality of the most dominant personalities. Here’s what I mean:

In any group the most dominant personalities do 80 to 90% of the talking. I like to say that the 5 most dominant personalities do 90% of the talking. It’s just a fact of group life.

If you’ve got a group of 8, the 5 most dominant personalities do 90% of the talking. If you’ve got a group of 12, the 5 most dominant personalities do 90% of the talking. If you’ve got a group of 16...you see where I’m going.

What can you do about it?

You're not really going to change the personalities of the more dominant members of your group. That kind of change rarely happens. But you can learn to sub-group for parts of the meeting.

When you take a group of 12 and sub-group into two groups of 6, you change the equation. Now, each group of 6 is working with its own set of most dominant personalities.

## How To Sub-Group

The key is to just do it. Don't take a vote. No one votes to sub-group or split up during the meeting. It's too tempting to all be together.

Here's how to get started with this important practice:

1. Arrange ahead of time for an additional facilitator (or 2 or 3 depending on how large your group is).
2. Figure out an easy way to try it the first time (could be, "Men, we're going to move into the dining room for questions 5 thru 8. Ladies, you stay here with Debbie.>").  
**Important: Note how directive the instructions are. Do not ask if the group wants to sub-group.**
3. Next week, repeat step two.
4. After 2 or 3 sessions the group will grow accustomed to sub-grouping for parts of the meeting. You're now ready to switch it up a little. Consider sub-grouping into groups of 2 or 3 for the prayer time. This is actually a great step in the direction of establishing accountability partners. **Important: When you move in this direction it's always a good practice to sub-group men with men and women with women.** The intimacy established is very powerful and will often lead to problems if you aren't careful.
5. When your group is used to sub-grouping, you might want to begin grouping more strategically. If you're considering birthing a new group, this is an opportunity to establish a more defined sense of community between members who may go with the new group.

## Sub-Grouping for Wider Disciple-Making

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It should be obvious that sub-grouping really will promote deeper connection. As group members really get to know each other, as they hear a different level of prayer request (and find themselves asking how the prayer request turned out), as they learn how to love one another, they will be more deeply connected than ever before.

What may not be as obvious is the potential for wider disciple-making. When more and more group members begin to exercise their influence muscles and help other members (or simply their broader network of connections) take their next steps. disciple-making increases and widens.

## Takeaway:

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Remember, the key to implementing sub-grouping is to just do it. No one will be glad immediately. Everyone will see the benefit after they've become accustomed to the practice.