GATHER, GROW, PRODUCE

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Leadership Guide and
"Saddle Up" Strategy

Contents

COMMITTING TO G2P

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Why Gather, Grow, Produce?

It is possible to grow a church and not grow Christians. Unfortunately, many leaders learn this lesson too late. Using various church growth strategies, they fill their churches and launch new ministries only to watch them struggle or fail. These failures can often be attributed to spiritual immaturity.

By placing people in positions of responsibility before they have learned how to follow Jesus in a meaningful way or even agreed with the church's mission statement, leaders have set themselves up for conflict and failure.

G2P is designed to help church leaders avoid these pitfalls by providing some simple tools that will help people grow spiritually, unify them around the church's mission, and help them find their place of service in the local church.

The G2P Toolbox

G2P will provide your church with:

» A powerful culturally relevant mission statement that is easy to remember, communicate, and rally your church around.

» A simple spiritual growth pathway that will ensure that members know your church's mission, know how to grow in their faith, know their spiritual gifts, and know how to use those gifts in your church.

» A set of ready-made graphics that will visually reinforce everything God has called you to do as a church. These can be placed in and around your church, silkscreened on clothing, and used in all your promotional materials.

Mission Statement

"Gathering together, growing disciples, and producing for the Kingdom"

Icons

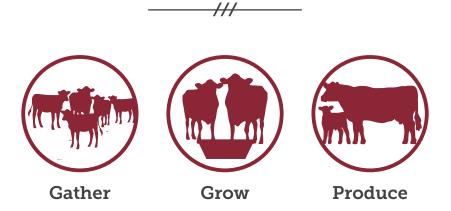The Gather, Grow, and Produce icons are essential to unleashing the power of G2P in your church.

Remember, G2P is much more than a program or new member class. It is a culturally relevant way to help members understand the demands of the gospel and go on mission for Jesus. They constitute a pathway for spiritual growth and development.

When placed around your church on signs,

hats, and flyers, the G2P icons are a constant reminder of your church's mission and vision. They provide a helpful tool for holding your ministries accountable to a clear standard. Are we gathering? Are we growing? Are we producing? If not, then why are we doing it? This saves a lot of wasted energy and helps keep everyone unified and on task.

You should have some of these icons made and ready to deploy around the church when you launch G2P.

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Gather   **Grow**   **Produce**

The Biblical Model

G2P is modeled on Acts 2:42-47.

"All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper), and to prayer.

A deep sense of awe came over them all, and the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders. And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had. They sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need. They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity—all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved." (NLT)

The early church faced many of the same challenges we face today. Many new believers were added to the church on the day of Pentecost, but they didn't know how to live for Christ and had no deep relationships on which to build a spiritual life together.

Does this sound familiar? It should. This situation is faced by many new church plants and growing churches. The excitement of God doing something new brings people in, but most of them are limited in their biblical knowledge and lack deep spiritual relationships.

The early church solved this by regularly teaching at the temple, but also encouraging prayer, worship, and fellowship in people's homes. This enabled believers to grow quickly in their faith and built such strong spiritual relationships that it attracted those outside the church. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved.

Commitments & Requirements

Essential Commitments

For G2P to work, you must make it the centerpiece of your church. Next to Christ and scripture, it must become the pattern for everything you do and the lens through which every ministry in the church is evaluated. **Anything less than this will not work.**

This means that you will need to:

» Adopt the suggested G2P mission statement and icons

» Establish ongoing G2P training for new members using the Saddle Up spiritual growth curriculum.

» Incorporate G2P language and artwork on all church publications.

» Frequently use G2P language and principles from the pulpit.

These commitments are essential to making G2P work.

G2P Also Requires:

» One or more healthy small groups
» A process for forming ministry teams.
» Trained Saddle Up leader(s).
» A designated time and place for ongoing Saddle Up training.

These things should be in place before launching G2P. If you don't have some of these things yet, don't worry. The purpose of this booklet is to help get you started.

The important thing to remember is that G2P is designed to help you lay a strong, biblical foundation for your church. **It is more important to do it right than to do it fast.** In most cases, it will take months to implement G2P. This is completely normal. Doing G2P right takes time.

PREPARING FOR G2P

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Start Learning

You don't just hop on a horse the first time and take off. You must be taught how to mount and give cues. You also need to learn how to groom, saddle, and care for the horse. There's more to it than meets the eye. There always is.

To be effective at G2P, you must learn everything you can about it. Read through this guide, familiarize yourself with the user materials, call or visit a pastor who has already implemented G2P and, if possible, attend a seminar or webinar to learn even more. There are also many tools available at www.americanfcc.org to help you implement G2P. Take advantage of these.

Remember, the first step in mastering anything is to learn about it. To skip this step is to plan to fail

Involve Others

Once you understand G2P and believe God may be leading you to implement it in your church, you must begin to involve others. You will not be able to implement G2P without the support of your key leaders.

If your church already has elders in place, begin by getting "buy in" from them. If your church doesn't have elders, meet with your core group or leadership team. In either case, be prepared to cast the vision biblically and spiritually. Lay people are often skeptical of programs or systems and may even resist them. However, they will respond to biblical authority. So, how you communicate may be as important as what you communicate.

It is usually best to present G2P as a biblical pathway to spiritual growth rather than a church growth program.

Tips:

Before you meet with church leaders, study and pray over Acts 2:41-48. Be prepared to discuss:

» The rapid growth of the Acts 2 church. *(3000 were added to the church in a single day.)*

» The church's response to this growth. *(They met both in the temple and in private homes for fellowship, worship, and prayer.)*

» The benefits of this approach. *(It provided a way for members to receive sound biblical teaching, to build deep spiritual relationships, to have their needs met, and to exercise their own spiritual gifts.)*

» How G2P can help your church accomplish the same goals.

Also, consider taking your elders or core group through the G2P Saddle Up training. G2P sells itself as people experience Saddle Up.

Develop a Plan

When your key leaders have captured the vision, it is time to put the pieces in place that will help you to successfully launch G2P in your church. This must be a team effort, not an individual endeavor. Be sure to involve your elders and/or core group in this process.

Here are some things that need to be in place before launching G2P:

- ☐ One or more small groups.
- ☐ A process for joining small groups.
- ☐ One or more ministry teams.
- ☐ A policy and process for joining ministry teams.
- ☐ A list of current ministry needs.
- ☐ A brief history of your church.
- ☐ A list of important church policies.
- ☐ User guides & icons. (Customized)
- ☐ Trained leaders.

Build Small Groups

It is hard to overstate how important small groups are. Small groups show up in the earliest days of the New Testament church (Acts 2:46-47) and have been central in every revival movement throughout church history.

Small groups help people to:

» Connect with others.
» Grow in their faith.
» Learn how to pray.
» Exercise their spiritual gifts.
» Minister and be ministered to.
» Be accountable to others.
» Remain connected to the church.
» Go on mission for Jesus.

A healthy, thriving small group ministry forms a pipeline of mature believers ready to carry out the mission and vision of the local church.

Small Group FAQs

What if my church doesn't have small groups yet?

Here are some concrete steps you can take that will help your church build a healthy small group ministry:

» **Pray.** You will need God's guidance to help you put this foundational ministry in place Don't go it alone. Seek God's help.

» **Commit.** If you are the pastor, determine in your heart to become the champion of this ministry. Small groups never thrive without the full-throated support of the senior pastor.

» **Recruit.** Seek out a person with a heart for spiritual growth to help you build a team that can oversee and resource this important ministry.

» **Leverage.** Use this team as the nucleus of your first group with the understanding that most of them will go on to lead new groups themselves.

Where can I get small group material?

One of the best resources for small group material is the pastor's sermon. A pastor or other leader can generate a brief discussion guide covering each week's sermon and distribute it to small group leaders via email. This helps people to process what they hear on Sundays and makes the pastor's teaching more effective and enduring.

Another good option is to use topical studies from Lifeway or another trusted resource. It is usually best if the pastor selects these materials. To keep it affordable, encourage members to pay for their own books but offer scholarships for those who cannot.

Where can I get more information about small groups?

You have many options when it comes to doing small groups. You can learn about those options and find expert help by going to www.americanfcc.org.

Build Ministry Teams

Most cowboy churches operate using ministry teams. These teams are groups of people that carry out specific ministries for the church. For example, many cowboy churches have an Arena Team. This team is made up of individuals experienced in arena events who are empowered by the church to operate the arena.

Because teams carry out the ministry of the church, it is vital to have policies in place about who can serve on a team and in what capacity. For instance, can non-members serve on a team? Can they lead a team? What about cohabitating couples? These are questions that need to be answered to avoid trouble down the road.

Once these policies are in place, your church will need to have some means of screening potential volunteers to ensure they are qualified to serve.

Screening

Screening potential team members can be as simple as getting to know a person and asking them to serve. In the very early days, this may be the best you can do.

However, to keep your church safe it is wise to consider asking potential workers to complete an application and background check, particularly if they will be working with children. This does not need to be expensive or complex. Numerous generic forms are available online and there are several inexpensive resources such as PublicData.com for performing background checks.

A huge advantage to screening is that it can help you sort people according to their spiritual gifts. The G2P Saddle Up curriculum provides a simple spiritual gifts test that can help you guide individuals to the place of service God has equipped them for.

Process

The most important part of building quality ministry teams is having a clear process for joining teams.

When this process is unclear, many people will avoid involvement rather than trying to figure out how things work in your church.

This is a common issue that G2P can help you address. Since the G2P Saddle Up course is designed to help members discover their spiritual gifts and explore possible places of service, this makes it an ideal link between your ministries and potential workers.

There is no substitute for personal touch when it comes to connecting people to teams. Someone must help each person connect with the desired team. This can be the pastor, an elder, lay pastor or another leader, but it must happen.

Some Helpful Strategies:

» **Assign a mentor.** If someone wants to participate in a specific ministry, arrange for a team member to meet with them and accompany them to the next team activity.

» **Leverage the leadership team.** Invite potential workers to attend a leadership team meeting and personally introduce them to the appropriate team leader. You will need to follow up to ensure the connection has been successful.

» **Invite team leaders to the last session of Saddle Up.** This will help leaders and potential workers to connect informally. It will also make people feel welcomed and wanted by the teams. Follow up will still be required.

You can find more useful information about teams and team structure at americanfcc.org.

Customize Materials

One of the nice things about G2P is that it can be customized for your church. For example, you can use the generic Saddle Up guides available from the AFCC or download a docx file and build your own.

G2P graphics are also available online so that you can use them in your own church signs and publications. You can find these materials at www.americanfcc.org.

The easiest way to customize the Saddle Up user guide is to use the notes section to add your own outline or materials. Topics you might want to include are your church's history, functional structure, and policies.

While Saddle Up is designed for three sessions, you can easily host a fourth session by producing a handout or companion booklet containing your own materials.

Train Leaders

Once you have one or more healthy small groups in place, have a well-defined process for helping people join teams, and have gathered and customized materials, it is time to train your leaders.

One of the best ways to do this is to begin with a model group. This will be made up of hand-picked leaders that will help you take G2P Saddle Up for a test drive. It can be made up of your G2P team or other key leaders in the church such as elders or lay pastors. But, keep this group small—you want them to help you iron out any rough spots in your presentation.

Present Saddle Up to this group and allow them to critique the experience and make suggestions. This will sharpen your presentation and help develop potential leaders at the same time. Model Saddle Up videos are available at americanfcc.org.

LAUNCHING G2P

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By now all the pieces are in place and you are ready to begin rolling out G2P. This should be done in two distinct phases.

Leadership Roll-Out

Be sure to take your leadership through Saddle Up before launching G2P in your church. This will help leaders feel valued and informed and will help unify the church when you officially launch G2P.

This soft roll-out can be done in a large meeting or banquet utilizing G2P team members or elders to assist and offer testimonies. Or, you can quietly take leaders through Saddle Up a few at a time. The former will build a sense of excitement for the official launch of G2P while the latter will model the Saddle Up experience you will want everyone to have when G2P becomes a normal part of the life of your church.

Membership Roll-Out

Now that your leaders have completed the Saddle Up training, it is time to prepare for the "official" roll-out.

Details

If you have not already done so, make sure you have nailed down every detail of your first Saddle Up class.

» When will it be held?
» Where will it be held?
» Who will lead it?
» How long it will last?
» Will food be provided?
» Will there be childcare?
» Will there be a charge?
» Are there plenty of materials?

These are the details that will determine whether your first Saddle Up will be perceived as a hit or a flop. Make sure you get them right.

Promoting G2P

Once the details are firm, it is time to begin promoting Saddle Up to your church. There are many ways to promote Saddle Up including:

- » Announcements
- » Sermons
- » Video Promotions
- » Social Media
- » Mail and/or Email
- » Posters & Signs

You should take advantage of as many of these as possible. Promotion should begin at least 4-6 weeks before launch and should **NEVER END**.

Although launching G2P Saddle Up training will consume more resources than supporting it, the day you stop promoting Saddle Up it will become just another failed program. Ongoing promotion is a must.

Setting the Calendar

Use the calendar below to help plan your own G2P Saddle Up roll-out. These are only ideas, not guidelines. The important thing is to have a plan!

Week One
- ☐ Place icons
- ☐ Introduce mission statement
- ☐ Launch sermon series
- ☐ Announce dates

Week Two
- ☐ Launch social media campaign
- ☐ Begin testimonies

Week Three
- ☐ Push to small groups
- ☐ Bulletin inserts
- ☐ Review Preparations

Week Four
- ☐ Continue testimonies
- ☐ Finish sermon series
- ☐ Begin Saddle Up!

Evaluating Effectiveness

Congratulations! It is our hope that with this leader's guide, online resources, and other AFCC support that you have successfully launched G2P Saddle Up in your church. But, that doesn't mean your job is finished.

Like any other ministry, Saddle Up must be reviewed periodically to make sure that it is meeting the needs of your church. Below are some helpful questions to ask:

» What is right?
» What is wrong?
» Is anything missing?
» Is anything confusing?
» Is there room for improvement?

Proactively asking simple questions like these can help identify small issues before they become big problems.

Making Adjustments

When you identify an issue in your Saddle Up program, the problem will often suggest its own solution.

However, there may be times when things aren't that simple. In such cases, gather your G2P team or elders and use the following questions to help you discover the best solution.

» What is the problem?
» What is the cause?
» What are some possible solutions?
» What are the probable outcomes?
» Which solution is best?
» How will it be implemented?
» Who will implement it?

Answering these questions will generate quality solutions that will help you keep Saddle Up on track.

Getting Help

This booklet was designed to give you the basic tools needed to implement and troubleshoot G2P and Saddle Up training in your church. It is not a comprehensive guide and you may have questions or issues that are not addressed here. If so, don't despair.

The only way to do G2P right is to move through the steps one by one. It takes most churches 6-12 months to prepare for the launch of G2P. Remember, you can only eat an elephant one bite at a time.
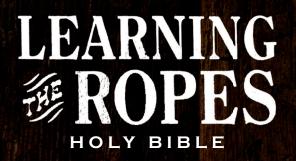
There are numerous helps available online at www.americanfcc.org and the American Fellowship of Cowboy Churches has a team of experienced pastors available to help you work through difficult issues. Don't hesitate to call on us. We are here to help.
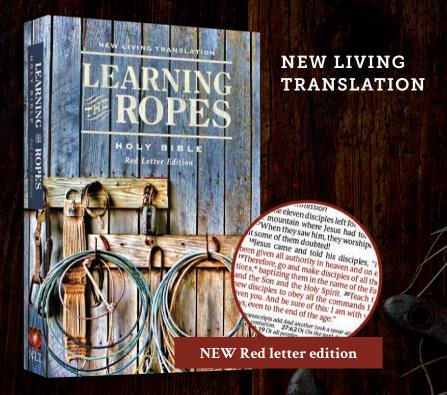
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LEARNING THE ROPES

HOLY BIBLE

CREATED WITH COWBOYS IN MIND
Includes Old & New Testament

NEW LIVING TRANSLATION

NEW Red letter edition

Contents include Old and New Testaments, Learning the Ropes introduction and steps to learning the ropes, topics to consider, tackling tough issues, abundant living, great stories of the Bible, a dictionary/concordance plus much more. Readers can also go to the four-page color insert to learn more about a relationship with Jesus Christ.

AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE IN THE CHURCH OFFICE.
Provided by the American Fellowship of Cowboy Churches.