

Growth Points

with Gary L. McIntosh, Ph.D.

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Start a New Class

A curious thing happens when a new class is begun. It grows! If you want to see your Sunday School enrollment and attendance increase, the most predictable way to do so is to begin new classes.

The church growth principle behind this truth is often stated as new units bring new growth. If you want to reach new people, you must start something new. Face it. If new people are not responding to old

ministries, groups or programs, it will take something new to reach them.

Actually, there are two rules of thumb concerning the number of education classes in your church: 1) "Merging classes inhibits growth," 2) "Creating classes encourages growth."

These rules have been shown to be true from children's elementary classes to senior adult classes. Attendance in two classes will likely be larger than the attendance would have been with only one class. Eventual attendance in three classes should be larger than in just two.

The authors of the book, *Growth: A New Vision for the Sunday School* provide eight reasons why new classes should be established:

1. New classes provide a positive answer and response to human need.
2. New classes are often more effective in incorporating people into caring, belonging fellowship.

3. New classes enlarge the appeal to new "kinds" of people.

4. New classes are needed to replace those classes which have stagnated or have reached their saturation level.

5. New classes provide more people with meaningful involvement and service opportunities.

6. New classes discourage clustered, self-serving attitudes and programs.

7. New classes are usually more effective in winning new people to Christ and the church.

8. New classes help the "single cell" church begin the process of cell multiplication and growth.

It takes
new
classes to
reach
new
people!

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Identify a target group for a new class.

Focus on study and relationships.

The best intervention to stimulate a healthy increase in attendance, membership, and enrollment in your education classes is to start new classes! Here are some steps for doing so:

1. Identify a “people group” for your next class. This group may be based on age, marital status, family status, special interests, problems, concerns, or any other important defining factor in a person's life.
2. Learn more about the people in this group and the kind of class that would meet their particular need. Think about why THEY would want to come to a class like this...not why YOU would want them to come.
3. Find two committed members or regular attenders who are willing to help start such a class. The leaders should be similar to the target group, or at least be able to identify with the group through experience.
4. Select a topic for an initial 8-12 week class. The topic should be based on your research of topics of interest to the people in your target group.
5. Search for a curriculum, book, or video series that will guide the study and discussion.
6. Determine the best time and place to meet. It is best to ask people in your target group what they think would be the best time and place to meet.
7. List (by name) prospective attendees to the class. Build this list from friends, neighbors, relatives, contacts of people who would have an interest in the topic. Include people both inside and outside the church.
8. Develop an e-mail or brochure explaining the class content, purpose, curriculum, when and where you will be meeting, and any associated costs.
9. Extend personal invitations to the first class session.
10. Focus on both 1) studying the topic, and 2) developing relationships among members.
11. At the conclusion of the 8-12 week class, present the option of either concluding the class, or continuing to meet. If you have focused on nurturing relationships in the class, normally 75+% of the time the class will want to continue. If so, encourage them to continue meeting on a longer-term basis.

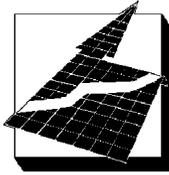
For additional ideas on starting new classes in your church, see *What Every Pastor Should Know* (Baker Books 2013) by Gary L. McIntosh and Charles Arn.



Adapted from *What Every Pastor Should Know* (Baker Books 2013) by Gary L. McIntosh and Charles Arn.

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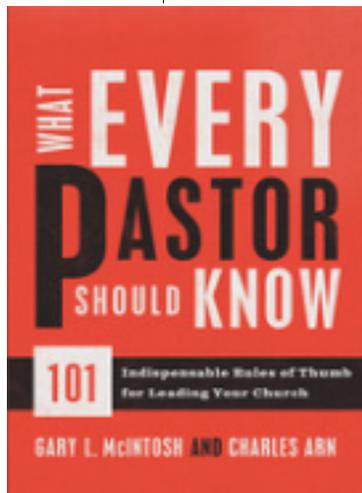
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