

Think Small

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Think Casey's Blog...

Title: Passion

Sometimes I wish I wasn't as passionate about things as I am. My passion has brought me some success in life and it has brought me some failure, depending upon how I used that passion. It is about 5:55 AM, and I am sitting in my living room writing this. I wish I could say that this feels like a job or a task that I have to complete, but it doesn't. I love being here with you guys each week. I love touching base and being able to lead and guide you on a weekly basis. I am passionate about leaders, which means I am passionate about you. If you are reading this, realize that you have major influence on this earth. If you have major influence, you have major responsibility. If you have major responsibility, you need major prayer. We are sharing some exciting information in group this week, and I want you guys to stop and be passionate about God for a few minutes. Here is the reality: you can prepare this week, go to group, and be ready to tackle hell with a water pistol, but if you haven't prayed and asked God for his leadership in your life and in the lives of your group members, you will not be successful. Here are a few things to pray about:

- Ask God for help right now in facilitating.
- Ask God to give you clarity and purpose for what you will be sharing.
- Ask God to speak into the lives of all of your group members.

Guys, I love being here with you because I believe in you. Our entire ministry team respects Growth Group/Connection Group leaders and it is because of you that we can accomplish God's vision for this local church that is gaining influence in the world. Don't underestimate your influence; it is great.



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Objectives

- To share Mountain Lake's goals for this year by looking at the brochure
- To discover how the group members feel about what is shared
- To share the vision about why we do what we do as a church

****Please make arrangements to pick up your group's Because We Care packets this weekend at the Connection Group table located in the lobby. The packets contain the Message Based Curriculum for this week and include all the information that we shared at the Lovejoy's house this summer. If you are unable, please contact Renee Weber immediately at 770-888-2513 ext. 21.**

Special Announcements/Dates:

***Wednesday Night Live** will be August 23rd at 6:45 P.M. Our group will meet on campus that week instead of in our host home for time to worship together as with other Growth Groups and to hear Shawn Lovejoy's heart for the future of MLC.

Facilitators' Guide

- After 15 minutes, gather your group to discuss the following questions. Open with prayer and then quickly begin addressing the questions. There is a lot of information to share this week.
 - Go over the special announcements and dates.
 - Address question number one before you pass out the brochures.
1. **What is a "small" thing you have said or done that has gotten you into a whole lot of trouble?**
- Facilitation Tip: Do NOT read from these notes in a group setting. You can study and prepare, but DO NOT read from the notes while leading the group. You can even have them with you, but please understand that people want to hear from you as their leader. Don't ever say, "Here is what Casey or Renee said." You want to personalize everything this week and every week. Lead from your standpoint, not ours. This will help you be a better group leader over the long haul.

- This question is to be used as an Ice Breaker for your group. Please use as many ice breakers as you need, depending on how mature your group is. If you have new people in your group (even if it is just one new couple) always ask some history-giving ice breakers so everyone can learn about each other.
- For me, one small thing that gets me in trouble with my wife is my use of the words “never” and “always”. I have a tendency to say “I always,” and my wife looks back with a little smile and says, “always?” I have learned to stay away from overgeneralizations in my marriage! Trust me – it helps to not exaggerate! What about you? Share with your group something that they wouldn’t know about you and encourage some others to do the same. Then move on.

2. Look through the Because We Care brochure: (Leaders will provide these during your group time.)

- At this point, hand out the brochures. You should have one per family. There are several things to look for in the packet. There should be a letter from Shawn, a Because We Care brochure, a commitment card, and a giving perspective chart. What you need to do is lay down the law when you hand these out by saying, “Guys, I know there is a lot of information here and you will be tempted to rip the booklet open and go through it, but please wait so we can go through it together.” Don’t let them go ahead of you; keep their attention.
- As you prepare to lead your members through the brochure, the first thing you need to know is that it is going to be simple. You are going to literally just read each section of the booklet and get feedback along the way. You are experts at this since you went to Shawn’s house. Everything we shared there is in this booklet, so let’s jump in!
- The first thing you want to do is explain to your group how excited you are to be able to walk through this information with them. You will set the tone for the night by your introduction into the brochure. This is “personalizing” the information. Share this brochure like it is yours, because it is. Guys, you are the “A” team in the church; this will be your time to shine!
- Read Shawn’s letter aloud, then go directly to reading the brochure. Leaders, I think this is a great time to share about how much you love and respect Shawn as the lead pastor of our church. You can share about how he had us all over at his home and how he and Tricia are so deserving of our love and respect in light of their awesome leadership. One of the best things you can do is publicly praise our lead pastor. God has blessed us with Shawn, and it would be great for our groups to talk about how influential he is and how much we appreciate his commitment to caring about what God cares about.
- Read the scripture on the front of the brochure. In this passage, Jesus is talking about having compassion on people because they are like sheep without a shepherd. Explain that we are in the third year of a spiritual initiative called Because We Care. The basic premise of Because We Care is “Caring for the things that Christ cared about.” What did Christ care about? People. Explain that everything we are about to read and go over is about helping people; it’s not just a church plan. Everything our church does is connected to the idea of extending the kingdom of heaven to people who do not know about Jesus.
- Jump to the inside of the brochure and read the left page aloud. It covers Because We Care, Building the Body and Think Small. You can explain that this is the same three-year initiative with different themes each year. If you have some people in your group who have been around longer than a year, ask them to reminisce about the past themes. Ask if anyone remembers BWC.com, the Because We

DON'T care videos, or Chad and Rodney dressed in spandex. Also, ask for members to share their thoughts when they consider the past three years of life at Mountain Lake Church.

- After you finish talking about the past, look toward the future for this "Think Small" series. As you go through the brochure, you need to read each section and share excitement about the different goals. Question 3 breaks down this approach.

3. As you work through the brochure, what excites you about each of the following sections and why?

***Caring for our church family**

***Caring for our students**

***Caring for our community**

***Caring for our world**

***How will we accomplish this?**

- You should read each section aloud, then stop and be the first to share why YOU are excited about that goal. For instance...
- Caring for our church family: I am most excited about Fellowship One, our new software, because of the protection it will provide for our children and ease of checking in and out. Also, it will help us to be better stewards of our people. We will be able to know what is happening more effectively in people's lives. You might be most excited about something that isn't listed, such as pastors attending every single Growth Group or Shawn visiting groups during the year. You might just be excited that we want to care about each other as the church family. Whatever it is, share and then ask, "That is what I am excited about, what about you guys?"
- Caring for our students: I am excited for the students we have now and for the ones that will come to Mountain Lake someday. There are schools being built left and right in this area, and it is great to know that we will have a full time pastor working with our students and the students that aren't yet here!
- Caring for our community: Well, I am not going to lie... I am so EXCITED ABOUT OUR NEW WORSHIP PASTOR! I really think people in our community will come back just because of how good the music is week to week. Share your thoughts and then ask your group, "What excites you about reaching out to our community?"
- Caring for our world: You can share about any mission work you have been a part of and talk about how you are excited that we are giving away money to other churches around the world!
- How will we accomplish this?: This one could get a little bit touchy. Remember, we are talking about MONEY! Money, money, money... It always brings out the snakes. Tip: If you have some yahoo in your group who starts being negative, don't let it go on for long. Cut him/her off by saying, "I would love to talk with you about this one on one, but this isn't the right time to be critical!" There is a difference in someone struggling spiritually with the idea of giving money and someone being critical of the vision of the church. You are the lead vision protectors in our church! So when you read through this back page, you will be able to explain very clearly what we are going to do to accomplish our goals.

- Talk about the one time offering and let people know that we only do one of these a year. Also, talk about the one year commitment over and above regular giving to MLC. You need to be extremely clear that we are doing two things: take up a cash offering and make commitments for the next 12 months. You can encourage people who have been around MLC to re-communicate the commitments they have already made so that if something has changed, making them unable to fulfill a commitment made previously, they can change it now. Also, some people may want to renew a commitment for more in light of a positive change that has happened in their lives. The \$500,000 is 1/3 of our three year goal of 1.5 million dollars. I just wanted to give you numbers so you know where everything is coming from. And please help everyone understand that every penny given goes to accomplish all of the goals listed above! We are coming together to make a difference.

4. Share about how God has changed your thinking in regards to visionary giving since coming to Mountain Lake Church.

- We ask this question in order to give you and the people in your group an opportunity to talk openly about the subject of giving financial resources. I truly believe this helps people when they can talk about how their perspective has been changed for the good. Personally, my perspective has changed drastically; at one time I thought that the more people gave the more money pastors made...until I became a pastor!!!! Now I see that when I give, life change happens in others because God's body operates and thrives off of the resources of its people. Encourage your group members to share how their perspectives have changed in the area of visionary giving.

5. What small step(s) can you take this month to allow God to work through you to see God's vision fulfilled in your life and in our church?

- Now is the time to get practical. Everything up until this point has been focused on thought – now we step into action. In other words, now that we've talked about all of this, what are you going to **DO** about it? Start by sharing from your heart, as the leader, and let people know the process you are working through. It may be that you are trying to figure out how to make some extra cash before impact day. It might be that you are planning to not go out to eat as much so you can give more over the next year. It might be anything... Just encourage everyone to talk about practical steps to preparing our hearts and lives for impact day.
- Pray together to end the night. Thank God for all He's doing in and through you, your group, and our church.