

# Growth Points

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## The Two-Step Approach

Here's the good news about adult classes: They are a great place to make friends. Here's the bad news: The longer a class has been together, the harder it is for newcomers to relationally "get in".

Adult classes have a "saturation point"-two years and they are relationally full. There is a solution, but not many churches know it, or how to use it...

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The solution for dealing with a saturated adult class is simple-start a new class. But how, exactly, does that work? Here is a rule of thumb called the "two - step" approach to starting a new class. But first, some background...

Some churches organize their adult classes on an elective basis. New classes are begun each quarter and people select classes based on their particular interest.

This approach has some nice benefits:

- It provides a variety of interesting classes in which members can learn new things
- It makes it easy for newcomers to get into the classes, because they are all new classes beginning each semester
- Different members of the church can get involved in teaching a short class in their particular area of interest and knowledge
- It provides a flexible schedule for summer

Other churches organize their adult classes around a longer-term format in which they meet indefinitely. This approach, too, has some nice benefits:

- Class members grow to know and love each other as they share life's ups and downs together
- Members rally around and support fellow class members in times of need
- Those involved in these classes tend to be regular attenders in worship and bigger financial givers to the church
- These classes usually have the same teacher year after year, which provides consistent leadership

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# Renew the class for a longer term.

## Meet needs, eat and play together to help create a bond.

Here's how to apply the “two-step” approach to starting new adult classes that take advantage of the strengths of both kinds of classes—short-term and long-term. Two-step means to: 1) start short, then 2) go long. It refers to the length of time the class meets. Here's how it works...

The best number of times for a new class to gather is between six and ten. Why? Six weeks will provide a minimum number of connection opportunities for people to get to know each other, develop a sense of identity, even remember other's names.

On the other hand, if you ask people who have not recently been involved in a class to commit to more than ten meetings, they will be much less likely to do so. So, don't ask them to...yet. In your first meeting, inform the class that you will be meeting for (somewhere between six to ten weeks). Explain that at the end of that time, the class will decide if they want to continue meeting.

In each of the six to ten meetings, spend time nurturing relationships among members and developing a sense of camaraderie in the group. Don't push relational dynamics too fast, but do encourage and facilitate a growing sense of community among members.

By their third week participants will have begun to develop a sense of familiarity with the people, the place, and the experience. Eventually, after about six weeks, the value that members experience from the relationships in the group becomes equal to or greater than the value they receive from the study of the actual topic. And an amazing thing has occurred...the class has become a group!

Now, for the second part of the two-step. On the next-to-last scheduled meeting, ask the class to think about what they would like to do in terms of the future. The following week, ask class members “What do you want to do now? If you decide to keep meeting, continue building and nurturing the sense of community among class members. Focus on helping meet needs, eating meals together, playing games, or anything else that will help bond the new class together.

As your new class moves beyond a short-term topical focus to a long-term relational focus, an important “value added benefit” begins to appear. Participants develop a sense of identify, of belonging, and of community in their new class.

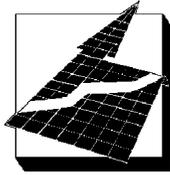
But...once you've succeeded in starting a new long-term class (the second step), keep repeating the two step approach by starting a new class so that new people can find a place, as well.

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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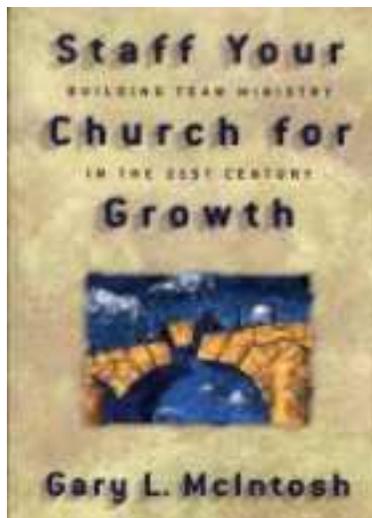
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