

Relationships Matter

Dear Friends,

What do you think is the number one reason why people choose to stay in a particular church?

I'm not sure, but my guess is that relationships would probably be the reason. I hear from many people that it is the relationships they have formed that often play a large role in whether or not they stay in a church, get plugged in, are spiritually fed, etc. I think we would see a lot more people interested in a relationship with Jesus if we were better as Christians at simply sharing life together with people, rather than sharing "religion."



It is with this in mind that the pastor of my church set out on a mission to make small groups a cornerstone of our church here in Bucharest. We have over thirty small groups that meet each week in various zones throughout the city. Each group is studying the book of Romans, chapters 12–16, and praying together, worshiping together, and fellowshiping together.

In our youth group alone, over ten individuals have stated that it was the small groups that most impacted them and made them

stay in the church. Small groups are an opportunity for relationships to be formed, for people to dialogue and ask the real questions that are keeping them from growing spiritually, and a chance for people to go deeper in prayer and service to one another.



This year I will be leading a small group of six different youth from our church. I am excited. We have one girl in the group who wants to join us, but is very new to Christianity. It is a great opportunity to help her grow in her walk with Christ. In addition to studying together, we will be cooking together, sharing stories, and investing in each other's lives.

Please pray that God would give me wisdom and speak through me as I lead this group and attempt to challenge them towards spiritual growth and maturity. It is an awesome responsibility, but one I look forward to!

From your "Romanian,"

Mike

Stories and updates: www.romaniaandmike.blogspot.com

Financial contributions: OC International c/o Michael Lundell P.O. Box 36900 Colorado Springs, CO 80936 or visit www.onechallenge.org

From the President...

Our Mission

*To mobilize
godly and
effective
Church
leaders to
reach all
nations.*

Our Vision

*Healthy
churches
working
together to
disciple all
nations.*

Twice a year OC's International Leadership Team (ILT), which is composed of our Colorado Springs-based Executive Leadership Team along with our six Area Directors, meets together for a week of strategic planning meetings. Last month our ILT meetings were conducted in the country of Romania, where for more than a decade OC has been assisting the churches of Romania to saturate the nation with healthy churches.



ILT meeting participants.

The primary purpose of the meetings in Romania was to work on OC's strategic ministry plan for the years 2009–2011. I traveled to Romania with a strong sense that these ILT meetings were of great strategic importance. In large part, this conviction was the result of a deepening sense of stewardship I have felt over the past number of months related to the growing personnel resources and expanding ministry opportunities the Lord has graciously entrusted to OC.

At a time when many North American mission agencies are declining in size and impact, we entered these meetings with more OC ministry personnel, serving on more ministry teams, impacting more national church leaders, in more countries of the world, and with more strategic ministry opportunities before us than at any time in the 57-year history of the mission! During our week together in Romania, through daily times in the Word, in prayer, and robust interaction, we earnestly sought the Lord's direction concerning the most strategic ways to steward the resources and opportunities He has entrusted to us as a mission.

As the meetings concluded, I had a deeper conviction than ever that this is indeed OC's hour! I was thrilled to hear the reports shared by our Area Directors concerning the strategic ministry goals and projections they are envisioning for the years 2009–2011. If the Lord provides us with the needed additional ministry personnel, in the next three years we could see OC grow from 57 to 80 ministry teams (40 percent growth!) and from 23 to 31 resident fields (35 percent growth!) With this growth in size we are envisioning an exciting acceleration in the worldwide impact of OC's ministry (which last year impacted over 2,600,000 national church leaders in 76 countries).

We completed the meetings in Romania encouraged and energized. As never before, I covet your prayers for the Lord's continued guidance and provision as we begin to implement the ministry plans which were the fruit of our meetings in Romania.

With deep gratitude for your partnership,

Dr. Greg Gripenstrog



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