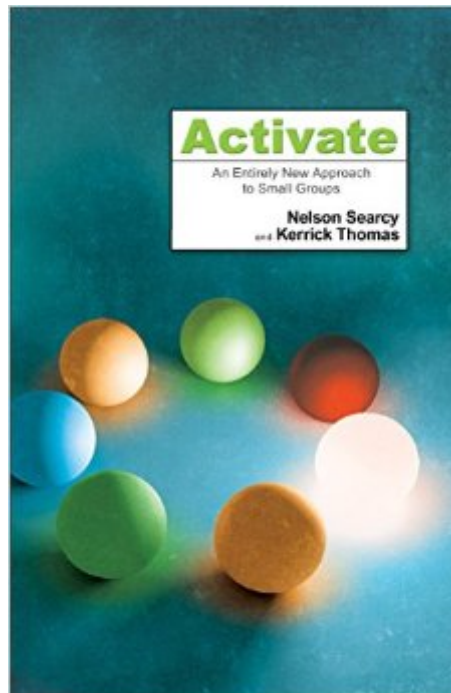


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# Activate: An Entirely New Approach To Small Groups



## Synopsis

Church leaders want to know how to make small groups work for their church communities, yet a quick look around shows that while small groups are popular, much of the time they create more problems than they solve. Nelson Searcy and Kerrick Thomas, founding pastors of The Journey Church in the heart of New York City, suggest that this failure is due to widely held beliefs about small groups that just aren't true--and they aim to debunk the myths and set the record straight! Drawing from the startling success of small groups at The Journey Church, Searcy and Thomas show how church leaders can implement a life-changing small group ministry that gets the maximum number of people involved and solves many of the important problems facing churches of all sizes.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

These guys are experts at their model, and perhaps the greatest accomplishment of this book is that they make their model accessible and reproducible. Their approach to small groups is indeed novel in places and quite refreshing. For example, their discussion on covenants is valuable. I love that they give people relationships and responsibilities to help connect them to the church. Their discussion on enlistment techniques is great; perhaps worth the price of the book on its own. Many of the other reviews have highlighted all that is great about the book, and I find much agreement there. However, there are a few areas of concern that should be pointed out. First, this is not an entirely new approach to small groups. For those of you from baptist backgrounds you may

recognize the 12 week topic driven trimesters as something similar to discipleship training classes. This is not a bad thing. I find no fault with this set up. My perception is that the "entirely new" part of all this is in the details, not the model. We're a traditional midwestern church and have been using this model for fifteen years. Should have written a book. Second, the book does not offer transitional advice for pastors of traditional churches. This is not necessarily a weakness, but the reader will need to find other volumes to aid in the transition process. Third, Searcy and Thomas's model is not small groups in the...dare I say it..."traditional" sense. Here is what I mean. Journey's small groups are curriculum driven, and (to use a distinction from Joseph Myers) these groups promote social relationships. Would you like to guess what we call a group that is heavy on curriculum and keeps relationships light? The answer is Sunday School.

Searcy and Thomas have written an outstanding book on starting or developing a small groups program within the local church. The material presented demonstrates a depth of insight that only comes from experience - it's easy to see how Journey Church in New York City went from a handful of people to over 1100 in worship attendance and over 1200 people in almost 100 small groups in just a few years. The book is easy to read, very well organized, very practical, yet gives the important 'why' behind each of the main ideas presented. (I would characterize his other book Fusion: Turning First-Time Guests into Fully-Engaged Members of Your Church in the same way.) The material is covered in several sections within two parts: the Activate Mindset, and the Activate System. The first half talks about several novel principles and shares some solid insight in sidebars and examples. The second half is really nuts-and-bolts on how to apply this approach not just as a set of disconnected ideas, but as a complete system that can be put in place. It doesn't tell the reader what needs to be covered or try to set an agenda for the groups, so there is still a lot of freedom for application and customization of the system to best match the needs of the church. Part One: The Activate Mindset\* Rethinking Small Group Methodology - Think Inside Out... Not Outside In - Think Larger... Not Smaller - Think Friendship... Not Intimacy\* Rethinking Small Group Structure - Think Short-Term... Not Long-Term - Think Promotion Months... Not Ongoing Sign-ups - Think Church of small groups...

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