



HELPING OR HURTING OUR SMALL GROUP? GROUPWORDS

Whether we know it or not, we all play roles in our small groups. And they can either help or hurt our group. In his book, Leading Life-Changing Small Groups, Bill Donahue describes these two kinds of roles and it helps me to occasionally review them and do a quick personal self-assessment. The following is an adaptation of Donahue's lists. I hope they will help all of us to think through our own roles.

Do we help or do we hurt?

HELPFUL ROLES:

- **Information Seeker** – helps others to tell their faith stories.
- **Opinion Seeker** – wants to know what others are thinking.
- **Initiator** – offers new ideas and opens the door for discussion.
- **Elaborator** – asks for more information, adding detail to the discussion.
- **Tension Reliever** – helps people to not feel alone: “I understand how you feel.”
- **Reviewer** – provides summary statements and clarity statements.
- **Consensus Seeker** – builds unity of thought in the group.
- **Encourager** – finds ways to affirm and support group members.
- **Visionary** – reminds the group of their overall goal and purpose.

DAMAGING ROLES:

- **Aggressor** – jealous, critical, insulting.
- **Rabbit Chaser** – consistently changes the topic.
- **Recognition Seeker** – focuses on their own achievement or success.
- **Dominator** – monopolizes group interaction, stifling discussion.
- **Crusader** – always focuses on their own special interest.
- **Negativist** – never satisfied, quick to point out the “down side” of any issue.
- **Quibbler** – gets caught in the details and loses the bigger picture.
- **Joker** – humor may be positive, but it is a distraction.

Of course, there are group roles that lie between these two extremes and the point of this review is for us to simply know that these roles exist and that we have a choice. Did you see yourself? Do you have a greater appreciation for those who have been helpful to your group? Why not give those helpful players a call or sent them a note or an email. Affirm and encourage them. And then determine what kind of role you want to play in your group.