

Nuggets Gleaned from Couple's Groups

By Mary Jane Hamilton, OHM Leader Training Assistant

Our first SALTS Couple's Groups were launched in October 2008. Since then a group has met in our home and OHM held a mini-SALTS for 12 couples over Valentine's Day weekend. We have discovered that these groups have impact beyond SALTS. Each couple's experience is slightly different, yet one commonality has been found: Marriage is a spiritual battle. Couple's group is a battlefield where we drive a stake in the ground for our marriage and fight for a deeper relationship with our spouse. Our Grace Group leaders have initially filled these groups because they long for more in their marriage and realize that healing comes through the body of Christ in relationship with others.

As I sat with the couples on Valentine's Day I wrote what they were saying about these groups. Following are just a few of the nuggets gleaned from these groups:

1. "I saw a clear picture of what it is like to be married to me."
2. There is resistance, fear and ambivalence. "Do I really want this?"
3. "Our patterns of getting stuck were



- broken."
4. "I found tools to iron out conflict and to approach it constructively."
 5. "One role of conflict is to lead us to greater intimacy."
 6. "Conflict is not about hurting one another, it is about healing."
 7. "We were settling for less than our best for our marriage."
 8. "I can 'raise the bar' knowing my spouse is capable of more."



9. "Make-up sex is NOT about mascara and blush!"
10. "Couple's group helped me see where I wanted to go."
11. "I learned to take my feelings into a conversation."

12. "I found some cylinders to run on. I am not settling."

As leaders we have sometimes filled our "marital empty spot" in our Grace Groups. We have led to get what we need. It is a false intimacy. My hope is that our leaders/couples will find their spiritual emptiness

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Meet Our OHM Intern

Verena Hunziker is interning at OHM for three months until May 11. Verena is from Windisch, Switzerland, where she worked at her church as a leader in discipleship, youth, evangelism and counseling ministry.

OHM: Verena, tell us why and how you became interested in this ministry?

Verena: Our church started Grace Groups after being exposed to the ministry in Germany. I learned so many things for myself and it was so helpful for counseling. Beyond Grace Group, what I learned helps me counsel people. I became so close to the Grace Group team and found that my relationships and friendships were growing so much deeper.

OHM: When we think of Switzerland, we think of beautiful snow capped mountains with chocolate, goats, cheese, Heidi and her grandfather. It all seems so peaceful. Do you mean to say that people struggle with wounds there as well?

Verena: Yes, I too enjoy the beauty of our country, but there are as many wounded people in Switzerland as anywhere else in the world. The rate of divorce has drastically risen and depression among students is a big issue. We work hard at keeping a bright, clean image, but behind closed doors there are a lot of people hiding

in their addictions.

OHM: What help has this ministry been to your church?

Verena: It is sometimes difficult to be open in front of those you fellowship with. But if you are not honest with one another Bible verses seem to just lie on the surface. In Grace Groups I see people getting honest and there is a new sense of life springing up. I see people breaking from an outward form of spirituality to a real connection with God and people.

OHM: How did you become interested in doing an internship at OHM and what do you hope to learn?

Verena: It is strongly on my heart to promote this ministry in Switzerland. As I shared this with others they encouraged me to ask OHM about an internship. I hope to gain a deeper understanding of how God hears us in community. I want to learn more about leading and training leaders. I want to become even more inspired by the vision OHM has for helping people address their spiritual and emotional needs.

