

Small Group Leader Tips Part 1

1. Open and close meetings on time. Starting on time will be tough as most people are “fashionably” late. But if you set the tone early, it will greatly help your consistency down the road. After the meeting, members can stay around longer to chat, but for those who have baby sitters or other things to get to, it shows respect to end at the scheduled time.
2. Confidentiality is key. Remind your group of this often. Let members know that what is shared in the group does not leave the group unless it is something that would be life threatening to themselves, or harmful to another person. If people do not feel safe in your group, then they cannot share fully or move forward with the community.
3. Clarify expectations. In the first month of meeting, it is essential to establish the direction and studies of your group. It’s also a good exercise for any group to do every 6 – 12 months. Members and leaders need to know the expectations of their roles in the group. Leaders also need to know what the members expect regarding the direction of the group and how it may meet their own needs. Clear communication is important to every group.
4. Facilitate effective group interaction. Effective group interaction serves as a place for growth, connection, support and encouragement, and for feedback. Encourage participation and try to find a balance between drawing out the quiet thinkers and squelching some of the over-talkative. Fine tune your listening skills and sometimes repeat back to people the thoughts that they have shared for greater clarity. Use open-ended questions and don’t be afraid to ask specific people to give their opinions and answers. The more people participate in their group, the more they will get out of it. Lastly, be sensitive to the Holy Spirit’s prompting in deciding whether to move on or to respond to an expressed need.
5. Facilitate caring ministry among group members. Remember people don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care. Model being a care-provider to hurting members in your group. Then begin to bring others along in the caring efforts until it “catches”. Hopefully over time everyone in the group will develop an attitude of caring ministry to each other. Use caution so that you do not let one problem end up dominating the time of your group. Remember that you have many members and everyone has equal value.
6. Invite supernatural intervention. Nothing of any eternal significance happens without the divine input of the Holy Spirit. The purpose of every group is to glorify God, which happens as we transform more to the likeness of Christ. Start by lifting everything in your group to the Lord in prayer. Pray for patience, strength, perseverance, love and most of all for God’s will to be done in the group. Secondly, stay in the Word both individually and as a group. Put into practice what God is showing you out of his Word, within your group and hopefully within the individual lives of your group members. Be willing and open to shift to God’s agenda at any time.