

Starting Your Small Group Meeting Off on the Right Foot!

Starting a small group doesn't need to be difficult. Remember, it is inviting people to do life together. A little food, a few icebreakers, and a heart for prayer and studying God's Word with others, will



start your new group off with anticipation and excitement. Here are some tips and encouragement to help your group start off with some laughter, food and memories!

- **Look for simple, fun ways to help your new group get to know one another.** Creative questions and icebreakers that bring laughter into the room are a great place to start. Don't be afraid to play icebreaker games to break the tension of a new group. The group may begin with surface-level questions such as "What is your favorite cereal and why?" to something more telling, such as, "What is your favorite childhood memory and why?" Look for ways for your group to learn about one another in the weeks following that first meeting. Over time they will go deeper and share life's joys, sorrows, and challenges.
- **Decide how much time you will have for each group meeting and stick with it.** Invest in the time it takes to keep things on track and respect those in your group to use the time wisely. A healthy small group will have about 40-50% of the time available for icebreakers and discussion. The other 50-60% is for facilitating the discussion and prayer.
- **Determine the goal of your small group and make sure everyone is on board.** Is the goal to study books of the Bible? Is the goal to build an authentic community? Is the goal to strengthen marriages or families? A little of all these things? Decide what the priority of the group is, and stay in alignment with the goals.
- **Develop efforts that connect the Scripture with real life.** Without this connection to Scripture, most of what small group participants learn and experience when they are together, never shows up in their life the other six days of the week. Work together as a group to be sure members have a chance to develop and use the new skills and things they learn. Practice sharing your testimonies with one another, how Jesus is working in your life on a daily basis.

- **Set expectations.** One of the most effective methods for reinforcing what small group members are learning is to establish a “norm” or expectations. Group members are expected to contribute to the conversation and to discuss the Scripture and topics each week. They are expected to spend time reading their Bibles and learning ways to voice what they understand or bring their questions to the group.
- **Never underestimate the power of food at a small group meeting.** Food, for the most part, makes people feel comfortable. It relaxes the atmosphere and helps people sustain higher energy levels. Provide variety or have others sign up to bring the different food items each time you meet.
- **The power and practice of prayer.** Depending upon their background, people are comfortable or may feel awkward with prayer. Remind those in your group that reading the Bible and prayer are communication with God. Prayer is one of the most intimate things a group does together because it reveals the heart of each individual. It is essential for every time you meet together as a group.