

Leader's Community Group Study Guide 2nd Semester Kick-Off, January 26, 2020

This guide is designed to give helpful hints in preparing & leading your group in discussion Read what is in red aloud to your group members.

FIRST NIGHT AGENDA

The First Night Agenda will help guide you through the first meeting of each semester of your group.

Goals of the First Meeting

- Rekindle relationships and meet new members
- Clarify your group's direction / expectations / commitments using the covenant
- Briefly discuss the sermon topic (if there is time)
- Pray for the building of relationships and spiritual growth of the group

Items Needed for the First Meeting

- Dinner / dessert plans decided
- [Community Group Covenants](#) – printed for everyone to sign
- Name-tags (host should write them out ahead of time)

Contact Your Group in Advance

- Contact all members one week before the first meeting to welcome them to the group
- You can check your roster online to see all group members and their contact information.
- Inform them of the location and time of your group, as well as any entrees to bring for dinner

3 ESSENTIAL PARTS OF YOUR MEETING

#1 Welcome, mingle and talk while you eat

Leadership Tip – Studies show that the first 7 seconds a person spends in a room can make or break the remainder of their experience in that room.

- Make sure people are greeted when they arrive
- Have drinks available when people arrive

- Upbeat music playing
- House cleaned, phone off if possible

#2 Think through the uniqueness of your first group discussion

- GOING OVER THE COVENANT IS CRUCIAL
- Let people know your meeting is going to start in about 5 minutes
- Why it is unique – getting to know each other, setting expectations

a) Sharing

- **Refer to homework** – Take time to do a few of the getting to know you questions
- **Sharing guidelines** – Explain the purpose of sharing exercises: Getting to know one another casually in (new groups) or reacquainting with each other (continuing groups)
- **Note to returning leaders** – feel free to adapt the sharing exercises based on the number of new members. All groups are encouraged to do some of the getting to know me questions

b) Worship (optional)

c) THE COVENANT – SET THE EXPECTATIONS AND VISION

- Everything rises and falls on how this is communicated
- Distribute the Covenant
- Go over the Covenant (see Leader's Guide to Covenant)
- MAKE PLANS FOR YOUR SOCIAL

d) Prayer

For New groups... Introduce the idea of Topical Prayer

- Everyone participates
- Brief, one topic at a time
- Pray as many times as you want
- Ask your host to close in a brief prayer dedicating the next quarter to God

For Continuing groups...

- You are encouraged to do something (prayer booklet or sheet) that will help people record their prayer requests and answers to prayer during the semester.

#3 Know that your dessert conversations are just as important as your meeting discussions

Leadership Tip – Never underestimate the significance of the time after the meeting. It is key to connect with people and find out more what people are all about.

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

1. Would you rather . . .

. . . win the lottery or live twice as long? . . . be reborn a 100 years in the past or in the future? . . . work in a group or work alone?

2. In 2020 which do you hope to experience the most and why?

- Adventure
- Relaxation
- Challenge
- Fun
- Something else (_____)

3. Looking back at your notes from this week's teaching, was there anything you heard for the first time or that caught your attention, challenged or confused you?

DIGGING DEEPER

One of the key reasons we meet in Community Groups every week is to gain the encouragement and support we each need to keep our focus on Jesus. Before you go over the Covenant in your group, take a moment to write down your responses to the questions below:

1. What are you looking forward to in your Community Group this semester?

2. Is there anything specific in your life you want to put extra focus on to grow yourself spiritually this semester?

LEADERS GUIDE COMMUNITY GROUP COVENANT STF

Leaders _____ Ph.# _____

Hosts _____ Ph.# _____

Small groups thrive on participation! The purpose of this covenant is to help you to discuss and clarify your group's goals, expectations, and commitments.

COMMUNITY GROUPS: THEIR PURPOSE

Community Groups exist to promote spiritual maturity and personal growth through meaningful Christian relationships and study of God's Word (Romans 8:29 & Hebrews 10:24, 25). We'll do this by focusing on four primary activities:

SHARE

Each week we'll take time to share what is happening in our lives. At first this sharing will include planned "sharing questions". But after the first few weeks, it will become more informal and personal as we feel more comfortable.

STUDY

Each week we'll study a section from God's Word that relates to the previous weekend's sermon or an appropriate personal growth topic. Our goal is to learn how to live out our Christianity in everyday life.

Our goal is to interact interpersonally on the topic and how we can practically follow Christ, not to answer all the questions

SUPPORT

Each week we'll learn how to take care of one another as Christ commanded (John 15:9-13). This care can take many forms such as *prayer, encouragement, listening, challenging one another, and meeting real needs.*

SERVE

Spiritual Growth is fostered not only by what we gain through the support and input of others, but also through service to others. The role each of us fills is important to the health of the church and for us to be the hands and feet of Jesus to our community (Ephesians 4:11-16). Throughout the semester, it is our hope that you can find and/or be affirmed in the ways God has designed you to serve, and make a difference in God's Kingdom.

FIVE MARKS OF A HEALTHY GROUP

For our group to be healthy, we need to . . .

- 1) Make spiritual growth our number one priority (Romans 8:29). ⇒ *Tangents – they are okay sometimes, but sometimes we need to be refocused. We'll need to keep spiritual growth our focus and stay on topic.*
- 2) Accept one another (Romans 15:7). ⇒ *We will have different preferences.*
- 3) Take care of one another (John 13:34). ⇒ *When crisis happens we're there to help with support, prayer, encouragement, listening, meals etc.*
- 4) Treat each other with respect (Ephesians 4:25-5:2).

⇒ *Listening to one another, if one's talking let's all listen, nothing worse than two conversations going on at once.*

⇒ *Our goal is to listen, not give advice. (Advice is given when asked for) We are not here to judge or fix – unless someone asks. An example of giving advice is by saying, "Well this is what I think you should do." On the other hand, that doesn't mean we can't question what is said or what someone is doing.*

⇒ *Some of us have the gift of gab, also known as a dominator – be careful, I as a leader might have to help you.*

⇒ *Be careful of gossip prayers. For example, "we need to pray for (person's name) because they are doing this ..."*

⇒ *No put-downs.*

⇒ *What is said here, stays here – of course we never promise confidentiality if something shared would be harmful to yourself or someone else and/or if I, as the leader, need to seek counsel on how to respond to an issue in the group.*

- 5) Keep our commitments to the group (Psalm 15:1-2, 4b). ⇒ *Please give us a call if you can't make it to Life Group so we know what's going on and how to pray for you.*

GUIDELINES & COVENANT

1. **Dates** We'll meet on _____ nights for _____ weeks. Our final meeting of this quarter will be on _____. *Fill in blanks.*
2. **Time** We'll arrive between _____ & _____ and begin the meeting at _____. We'll spend approximately _____ minutes in singing (optional), _____ minutes in study/discussion, and _____ minutes in prayer/sharing. *Fill in blanks.*
3. **Children** Group members are responsible to arrange child care for their children. Nursing newborns are welcome provided they are not a distraction to the group!
4. **Study** Our studies will focus on the same topic covered in the previous Sunday's sermon or an appropriate personal growth topic. Our goal is to learn how to live out our Christianity in everyday life. *Not to answer every question.*
5. **Prayer** Praying for one another. *You'll go over tips on topical prayer the second week of group. Remember - being forced to pray in group or just the idea of it can cause people to not want to come to your group. If you have new people in your group, you might want to say something like this: "It's exciting to see how God works in our lives through prayer. We also realize prayer in groups is something many have never done. Know that you will never be forced to pray." Let them know you'll talk more in the weeks to come on how we do group prayer and that we break a lot of the stereotypes of what it means to pray.*
6. **Homework & Attendance** Joining a Community Group requires a commitment to **attend each week and do the homework ahead of time**. Obviously, allowances are made for sickness, vacation, work conflicts, and other special events—but not much more! *This commitment is the key to a healthy group.*

If we cannot come to a meeting, we will call _____.
⇒ *Emphasize the importance of the commitment to attendance and preparation. (A good group starts with good preparation)*
⇒ *Make sure that everyone is with you. (Do we agree? Is this what we want? Make eye contact, etc.)*
⇒ *Most weeks require 20-30 minutes of homework to prepare for the group study and discussion.*
7. **Desserts** - *Have everyone sign up for a night to do dessert.*
8. **Social & Service Project(s)** - *Emphasize the importance of a social and service project. As a leader and host, have 2 or 3 suggestions ready and 2 or 3 potential dates. Choose a date or ask the group to bring their calendars next week. New groups are preferred to have their social by mid-semester.*

We agree together in Christ to honor this covenant. *(To be decided by each person on or before the third week.) Have the members sign the group Covenant now if they are ready. If not, they are welcome*

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|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. _____ | 6. _____ | 11. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 7. _____ | 12. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 8. _____ | 13. _____ |
| 4. _____ | 9. _____ | 14. _____ |
| 5. _____ | 10. _____ | 15. _____ |

