

CONNECT GROUP LEADER

Leader Support

ELEMENTS OF A CONNECT GROUP

There are four elements that each group must include each time they meet:

Prayer, Learning, Connection & Scripture

We've put together an agenda sample for you to use as a starting place for your own group agenda:

Hang out time (5-10 min)

- Greet people as they arrive
- Have name tags and pens easily accessible
- Index cards for prayer requests/praises
- Start on time

Ice Breaker / Introduction (5-10 min)

- Don't rush through this part. This can be a vital connection point for people.
- Think of this ... it might be the first time someone laughed that whole day.
- It might be the first time someone listened to them all day.

Study & Discussion (30-50 min)

- Watch the video
- Go through the study questions together
- Open discussion time
- Scripture

Closing & Prayer (10-15 min)

- Find a good landing point that features the theme throughout that chapter
- Collect prayer cards & take prayer requests/praises
- Announce homework activities or assignments
- Pray

WHO PRAYS?

Be prepared to pray every time. But also, put it out there.
Ask people by name, with no expectations.

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YOUR FIRST GROUP

Since you are an extension of Harborside, we want the atmosphere of your group to be a priority. Whether you are meeting in your home or on campus, the energy of your group directly impacts the way people engage or stay to themselves. Here are a few basic things we suggest for you to create an atmosphere that sets an optimal tone for a healthy group.

- Arrive early and be ready for people.
- Make sure you have seating set up optimally for conversation and visual access to the monitor if you're showing a video.
- Have extra pens, magazines or books for a hard writing surface if that is needed.
- Name tags help you and your group.
- Greet them with a genuine smile and warm welcome.

Snacks and drinks are not necessary. However, some groups take turns bringing them. If you meet on-campus, please clear out all trash for the next group that meets in that room.

BREAKING THE ICE

Great discussion does not happen accidentally. In a room full of different personalities that may not know each other, that is a recipe for the unknown. Putting together a plan for success minimizes uncomfortable silence where the entire group depends on you for asking and answering talking points.

First, we suggest an ice breaker. Getting the room interacting and laughing impacts how the rest of the group will go. Here are a few we love:

Three questions:

- Where were you born?
- How long have you been attending Harborside?
- What is your favorite local restaurant?

One question:

- What is the strangest food you've ever eaten?
- What did you want to be when you were growing up?
- What is your favorite ice cream flavor?

Pinterest and Google are loaded with ice breaker games. My last group looked forward to what ice breaker we would have each week. Some groups only did them the first time.

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GREAT DISCUSSION

You don't need to have all the answers. You don't need to do all the talking. As a matter in fact, you'll help people grow in their faith most when you're able to stop talking and facilitate a discussion among your group.

HERE ARE A FEW SUGGESTIONS:

Laugh. Start with something easy like an ice-breaker game. There is nothing like simple fun to get the laughter started. Surface-level conversations are much like a toe in the pool. Not everyone can jump right in to a deep conversation with a room full of strangers.

Follow-up Questions. There is an art to listening to what your group participants are saying. Be alert and ready to ask follow-up questions for more details without probing. Most people won't be ready to share everything right away, but your thoughtful questions give them permission to fully express their thoughts.

Allow for Silence. When a question is presented, give it some time to breathe. Silence might seem awkward, but giving time to gather thoughts and opinions requires silence. Their honest response might only come after a minute or two of silence.

Bring it Back. Conversations can stray off easily. And sometimes it happens before you know it. Use your instincts and listen to the Holy Spirit for discernment on when to reel it back to the topic.

End with Encouragement. Wherever your discussion leads, be real, but be encouraging. Offer an uplifting insight, thought, or action step that will give your group hope and inspiration that they need to bring them back next week. And always point them to Jesus and the scriptures.

GROUP CHALLENGES

Sometimes you get one or two people that answer every question. That's great that they feel so comfortable to engage every time. The real win is getting Silent Sally to speak and Windy William to keep his answer short and sweet.

Everyone Gets a Turn. When questions are presented, go around the room and ask one person directly the first question. They can answer or pass. If they pass, go on the person sitting right next to them. If they answer, the next question goes to the person right next to that one.