



Starting a Great Small Group



Helpful Hints that will Bless Your Group Right from the Start!

A Plan for Establishing a Great Group Meeting

The Small Group Ministry of WRCC exists to help people connect with God through **Bible study** and **prayer** and others through **fellowship** and **service**. The effectiveness of a small group begins with the leader! Small groups don't just happen. Leaders who carefully and thoughtfully seek the Lord for guidance develop quality groups. Use this information to guide you in planning your initial small group meeting.

1. Pray for God's Blessing

Know This - Leading a group is an awesome responsibility and a great challenge.

Do This - Pray daily for the Lord to give you insight into His Word. Pray specifically for the Lord to bless your leadership. Trust in the Lord. He will give you the skills to lead your group.

2. Set Your Group Vision

Know This – Pray about goals for your group before your group ever meets.

Do This – Define goals with your group by thinking about these points.

- With the help of God we will value relationships as much as curriculum.
- With the help of God we will encourage people to love God and to love one another.
- With the help of God our group will learn to pray for and with one another, supporting one another any way we can.
- With the help of God we will become a church of Jesus Christ in its smallest form.
- With the help of God, our group will incorporate the 4 Components of a Small Group. (***A worksheet is available at www.wrcc.org.***)

3. Understand the Context of an "Open House" Meeting

Know This – From time to time we may ask you to invite a new member or someone may call you inquiring about your group.

Do This – Remember that many people are trying a Home Group for the first time. They might be nervous just inquiring about your group. Calm their nerves by assuring them that all will be fine. If you don't have space for them in your group, tell them that you will contact the Small Groups Pastor and help them find another group. ****Note:** We pray that every small group member will become an extended part of the ministry and be an encouragement to others to get involved.

4. Prepare for Group Meetings with Your Co-leader or Apprentice

Know This - Partnering with a co-leader to help carry the load of leadership makes the group a joy and never a burden.

Do This - Identify a co-leader as soon as possible. Having a co-leader creates opportunities for you to share your ministry with another potential leader. This will allow you to build group stability quickly. Shared leadership is essential for the future growth of your group, so plan for the future by having a co-leader.

5. Prepare the Environment

Know This – You get one chance to make a good first impression!

Do This – Before your open house or first group meeting, make certain you are prepared by reviewing this list.

- Please be at the door welcoming your guests.
- Please have nametags and large markers available for everyone as they enter.
- Have a roster sheet for everyone to fill out with their name, address, and other information.
- Limit distractions by asking everyone to turn off or silence cell phones.
- Do not have any pets in the meeting area.
- Have light refreshments for your group members. In later sessions group members often volunteer to bring refreshments and some groups turn their fellowship into a full blown carry in meal each week with each family bringing something to share.
- Seating, lighting, and the temperature of the room are all important. Make certain you have a comfortable setting for your group.
- Some people may not have a Bible, so have a few extra Bibles available as needed.
- If children are invited to your group, have a place where they can play that allows the adults to study interrupted but is close enough to handle emergencies.

6. Warm Up the Group with an Icebreaker

Know This – Introductions are very important. An icebreaker warms the group and allows people to feel comfortable as they communicate with one another. Getting to know one another is a key component in the formation of a healthy group.

Do This - Have everyone share about him or herself by asking the following questions. Take time for these responses and do not rush. There is nothing more important than people sharing their stories. We have a large collection of fun Icebreakers if you'd like something beyond these basics.

1. How long have you attended White River Christian Church? Who or what influenced you to attend?
2. Who has had the greatest influence upon you to live a Christian life?
3. Why are you interested in joining a small group?
4. Looking ahead, where would you like to be spiritually one year from now? How might this group help you to achieve that goal?

7. Share the Facts About Small Group Life

Know This – Small groups are responsible to follow some basic principles. Agreeing to a set of ground rules will prevent lots of problems.

Do This – Review the list below as you begin to communicate about your covenant. The following suggestions are based on positive group experiences. You and your group will need to design your covenant around your specific DNA. A strong unified covenant is essential to group success. (**Sample covenants are available online at www.wrcc.org.**)

- Small groups meet 2 to 4 times per month. A regular schedule will make it easier to remember.
- Leaders can Host, but sharing that responsibility often strengthens leadership by allowing leaders to fully concentrate on any prep for study time.
- Groups may want to meet in the same place for the first three months. This is just one less thing to remember as your group is in the fragile formation stage.
- Someone needs to be in charge of communication and everyone needs to agree how communication will happen (phone, email, etc.).
- Plan for a meeting time of 1-2 hours. Do not abuse time commitments by either coming late or leaving early. Try to always be on time (this is very important)!

A sample schedule looks something like this:

- 30 minutes of fellowship, icebreakers, worship, etc.
- 60 minutes of Bible study and discussion.
- 30 minutes of praise and prayer.
- Homework is optional. Please note that often homework is perceived as positive but becomes a burden if it is too extensive or time consuming.

8. Allow Time for Questions

Know This - Great leaders are always great listeners.

Do This – Make certain that you have clearly stated that participation is essential to the health of the group. Allow the group time to ask questions. Encourage them not to leave with a question on their heart. Refrain from being the immediate “Answer Person.” The best questions are answered as the group looks for them together. Knowing “all the answers” will come back to haunt you as a leader and impede the growth of your group.

9. Follow Up the First Meeting

Know This - Often people need personal communication from the leader to realize they are wanted and valued.

Do This – Communicate with your group members within a few days after the first meeting. Your follow up phone call or email is very valuable. It is incredibly vital to establishing a successful group. Never underestimate the value of communication! Make sure to collect contact info from everyone the first night and then email it out to everyone in the group. You might consider having everyone take 2 minutes to do the **ONLINE** registration if you have a computer available.

Resources

You may want to highlight several verses to place group life in its biblical context. Sharing these with potential group members assures them that you are biblically sound in your desire to build community through a small group. Read these verses as a group and share the explanation listed for each verse.

- **Acts 2:42-47** - This passage represents a description of the early church and its values. This is how the church is meant to be. Explore the values in this passage. It is safe to say that these values are lived out best in a small group setting.
- **Acts 5:42** - The early church had two places to meet and gather as the Body of Christ: 1) temple courts, 2) house to house. The biblical context is that the early church understood the value of gathering together in homes for support, teaching, and encouragement. This fosters the idea of small group community, the relational heart of Christianity.
- **Exodus 18:19-27** - Jethro gives Moses advice on how to care for the nation of Israel. Notice that the plan is to divide people into groups. Each group is led by “qualified” leaders.

We use several slogans to convey the essence of group life:

- "We want to be the smallest large church we can be."
- "We love one another deeply, from the heart" as described in 1 Peter 1:22.
- "When our eyes meet, we want our hearts to connect."

For more information on starting or leading a Small Group, contact Phil Heller at pheller@wrcc.org or (317)773-2233 ext. 132.