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# group elements

## HOW TO HOST A SMALL GROUP MEETING

### Suggested Schedule:

Try to follow a time schedule to be sure that you stay on-track, maintaining consistency. People appreciate knowing that they will start on time and end on time.

#### **Welcome and Fellowship** (15 - 30 minutes)

- Open your meeting with a welcome and greeting time, usually incorporating snacks and a brief fellowship time.

#### **Prayer** (10 - 15 minutes)

- Have a time of prayer, possibly collecting prayer requests & praises before praying, or this can be done at the end of the group time as well.

#### **Ice Breakers** (5 - 10 minutes)

- There are different ice breakers and get acquainted activities that can be done before the study as a fun side note to encourage interaction.

#### **Study Time** (30 - 60 minutes)

- Study time, incorporating discussion as you go. There are many different teaching methods including study guides, reading books, videos, attending Christian Education classes together. Refer to Small Group Resources on the Grace website for more details.

#### **Announcements and Closing Prayer** (5 - 10 minutes)

- Close with prayer and any necessary announcements about upcoming studies or fellowship dates. This is a great time to be sure your group knows what is going on at church.

#### **Communion** (once a month, once a quarter, or at the end of each study series)

- All groups are encouraged to conduct communion at least once a quarter. More instructions are provided in the Small Group Member's Guide and on the Grace website.

### How to Plan Beyond Week-to-Week

- It is a good idea to map out a schedule for your group for 1 - 6 months. Each group is different and will have various obstacles to work through to keep their group meeting consistently, changing job schedules, holidays, kids activities, vacations, etc.



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- Have a calendar meeting: Sit down with a calendar and have all members provide their unavailable dates. Choose dates that you can meet on a regular basis. Consistency is the main key to successful groups.
  - It is good to plan a fellowship activity date every 6 weeks or so to keep your group fresh and renewed. On this date you will not do your regular study, but will enjoy a fellowship time. There are many ideas that have been successful with other groups, but you can be creative. Some examples are: potluck, progressive dinner, BBQ, camping, movies, bowling, putt-putt, game night, etc.
  - Plan for Missions or Outreach every couple of months. You can find serving opportunities on our website under the "Resources for Small Groups Members" section. You can also contact our Pastor of REACH, Shelley Long, for additional ideas.
  - Plan your Studies: Talk with the group and choose study material and review it to determine how many weeks it will take to get through it.
    - In our experience, it usually takes longer than we think, so plan a few extra weeks.
    - Having a goal to finish and a schedule to stay on usually gives people motivation to come. Knowing what studies are coming up also motivates them to be faithful.
    - Give them input in the material choice.
    - Planning ahead helps your members keep their group time reserved and also helps them plan for any material expenses. They may want to buy books or study guides for an upcoming study.
    - Set goals, guidelines and expectations about the various elements that will affect your group. For example... Can kids come? Will there be a babysitter? No gossip, starting on time, snack rotation, set up, clean up, etc. Review and have all group members sign the Small Group Covenant. Send a digital copy of the covenant to all group members.

## FELLOWSHIP IDEAS

### Regular Group Fellowship

- Have a short time of fellowship at each group meeting.
- Having the fellowship time before the study allows people to relax and open up. In the early stages of your group you may need to lead with asking each member of the group to share a few things about themselves during fellowship. The Small Group Team can supply you with ice breaker questions.
- Fellowship time is usually more successful when food is involved. Have the food set up before group members arrive and make it convenient to access.

*Let me get you something to eat so you can be refreshed.*

**Genesis 18:5 (NIV)**

- Celebrate birthdays in the group by having someone sign up to bring a cake once a month in place of, or on top of, the regular snacks. Have everyone sign a card.
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- Bring out an old map and give a different colored pencil to everyone. Have them plot on the map where they have lived. People might be surprised and delighted to find that their paths had unknowingly crossed in the past.
  - Play a short quiz game covering the material from the week before.

### Special Planned Fellowship

- You can plan a night of “sharing and worship only” once in awhile to reflect on what God is doing in your lives and in your group.
- You may plan a special service project to help someone in your group, in the church, or in the community.
  - Group goes on a local mission together.
  - Group finds a neighbor outside of Grace that has a need. (groceries, meals, ground or house maintenance, etc.).
  - Group may pitch in to help another member of the group with a project or difficult time. (helping move, hospital visit, meals).
  - Group may participate in a church project either already on the church calendar or create one. (raise money for missions, provide a dinner for pastors, greet together at a weekend service).
- Plan a progressive dinner and go from house to house with your group.
- Plan fun activities to do together ... (BBQ, movies, bowling, putt-putt, game night, potluck, etc.).

### PRAYER REQUESTS

Depending on the size of your group, there are many ways to do prayer requests.

- Delegate a member from your group to fill out the Event Summary feature in Grace Connect, either using a laptop or using the LEAD app on their mobile device. This will send the updated prayers/praises to the whole group by email and keep your group in communication with your Small Groups Director and the leadership of Grace.
- Go around the group and ask for requests and praises, and members can keep a log book of requests in a notebook and keep track of how the prayers are answered.
- Give a 3x5 index card to everyone and have them write down all their requests and praises, and then give them to another person to pray for during the week.
- Pass around a sheet to write requests on and email these to all members after each meeting.
- Be sure to share and record praises from your group members.