

HOST TIPS | FOR GROUP LEADERS

MEETING

Be consistent.

- Try to always start and end on time.
- Call/email/text members with any changes. Be sure to give them plenty of notice.
- Average group meetings are 1.5 - 2 hours each week. If your group likes to chat a lot, you may want to schedule a half hour of fellowship time before group, so your group study time can start promptly each week. Tell people something like “We will get together to catch up at 6:30pm and group will officially start at 7:00pm.” Make sure to get your group focused with worship and prayer time after fellowship time.
- Meet on the same night each week (if possible) to maintain consistency.

Small groups meet on a semester basis.

The reason for semesters is that they create an easy “on ramp” and “off ramp” for new people to join your group or for people to exit the group if needed. Having this type of schedule allows less disruptions within a group. If possible, begin and end your studies to match up with the small group semesters.

These semesters are:

- Winter | New Year’s Day to Easter
- Spring | Easter to Memorial Day
- Summer | Memorial Day to Labor Day
- Fall | Labor Day to Thanksgiving
- Winter Break | Thanksgiving to New Year’s Day

We encourage our groups to meet year-round, however, we realize there are certain life stages where a group might need to take a break for a semester. If your group decides to break for a semester (or other time period), try to gather at least once a month during that time for fellowship to stay connected. We recommend continuing a group email or text for people to share prayers and praises during this time.

During Winter Break we encourage groups to focus on fellowship, such as “Friendsgiving” (a Thanksgiving party) and a Christmas party for your group. This is also a great time for group outreach by volunteering in one of the many ministries in the church around the Christmas season, or volunteering at an outside Christian organization such as Operation Christmas Child distribution center.

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SETTING/ATMOSPHERE

- Welcome everyone as they enter and make sure introductions are made for any people who are new to your group.
- Always open in prayer.
- Be a servant – You are modeling for group members to do the same.
- Have snacks and fellowship at the beginning of group, which allows time for latecomers to get to group and not miss any of the study or sharing time.
 - The person hosting the group should not always be responsible for snacks. This is an easy responsibility to share with all group members.
 - Always have a fellowship time. Studies don't have to last the whole meeting.
- Some groups eat a meal before or after group. Be aware this can lengthen your group time. Again, this is at your discretion. Some groups prefer to share a meal on the weeks when they are just enjoying fellowship together.
- Make sure the room you are meeting in is homey and inviting so people feel comfortable. Be sure to have enough seating for all who attend.
- Since small groups are an extension of the church body of Grace Church, do not serve or consume any form of alcohol or drugs during small group meetings or events so as to avoid causing a weaker brother or sister to stumble. (1 Corinthians 8:1-13; Romans 14:19-21)

SHARING

- Share with the group your own questions about the study. Let them see that you too have questions, which might make them more comfortable sharing their thoughts with the group.
- Study guide questions are great, but always encourage members to jot down their own questions or thoughts to share as you go through the study.
- Initiate and get others involved. Ask for volunteers to pray or read, which gets more involvement from the group.
- Silence is okay. When you ask a question of the group, give everyone a minute to ponder the answer.
- Be aware of your member's comfort and confidence levels, as not to embarrass your members or put them on the spot. You can find this out privately ahead of time, or pass out a questionnaire for them to answer during fellowship time.
- Learn to gracefully move the conversation on when one member is monopolizing the conversation to allow others to have a chance to share. You can use phrases like "Let's see what some other people are thinking" to transition away from someone who is dominating the conversation.
- Have special times where you do not have a study.
 - Have members spend time sharing from their hearts or have a night where you get to know people when you let them tell their life story. This is where you can begin the bonding process and your group will realize we all have things in common. It's a good idea to give members guidelines on what to share to keep a general theme or focus.

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LEARNING

- Preparing lessons ahead of time will help you be a more confident host and will avoid disinterest and frustration by group members. Ask God for wisdom each week before you lead.

If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.

James 1:5 (NIV)

- All materials should be approved through the Small Group Team. This is not for censorship, but often there are underlying doctrines that do not coincide with the doctrinal statement of Grace Church that can create undo issues.
- Pre-approved resources are available in our *Small Group Resource Library* and through Studygateway.com.
 - Small Group Sermon Study Alignments will be offered regularly, where we greatly encourage all of our small groups to study the same material that correlates to the weekend message and the vision of our leadership.
 - Pastor Mark Schweitzer offers classes that he will come and teach to your small group. Contact him to set up dates when he is available. MarkSchweitzer@gracechurchco.com.
 - Attend one of our many Christian Education classes together as a group or as an alternative of attending group at your regular time.

LEADERSHIP

- Lead by example. No one is perfect, but let your members see you trying to follow Jesus' example of servant leadership. You should try to be honest, transparent, kind, loving, and patient.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

Galatians 5:22-23 (NIV)

- Delegate. People like to share responsibilities and want to contribute. Groups where each person has a responsibility to the group have better attendance and foster ownership of their group.
- Never allow gossip in your group.
- Learn to laugh at yourself. Remember that you will make mistakes, who doesn't? You should have a sense of humor because people need to laugh and small groups are a good place to learn or teach this.
- You are not expected to know everything about the Bible. Grace Church has a Christian Education team that can help you find the answers for your group.

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SUPPORT THE VISION OF GRACE CHURCH

You are an extension of the pastors and leadership of Grace Church. Don't allow negative conversations of any kind in your group, as this is damaging to group members. If a member has concerns, speak to them in private and take the matter to the Small Groups Director to help resolve the issue, if needed. Misunderstandings and lack of information can cause serious damage to a group and to the whole body of Christ if left unresolved.

PRAY FOR YOUR CHURCH BODY AND LEADERSHIP

The role of supporter goes both ways. You are an extension of Grace Church and you support / represent the leadership within your group. You are also SUPPORTED by the staff and leadership of Grace Church. Please contact the Director of Small Groups and they can help you or direct you to the staff member who can help resolve your problems or answer your questions.

GRACE CONNECT AND THE LEAD APP

Grace Connect is the primary way for you to interact with the Small Group Team. We need you to let us know who is in your group, what you are studying, and who attends. It is important to update your group roster as people join or leave your group, take attendance weekly, and keep your group calendar up-to-date. We have easy-to-follow instructions to complete all of these tasks, and we are available for individual help if you need it. If you have a group member that wants to take on this role, please let us know and we can give them permissions to do this in Grace Connect.

Our Grace website will list your small group if you tell us it is open for new people to join. Please inform us if your group status changes and respond quickly to anyone who inquires about your group.

Grace Connect allows church members to connect with one another. Encourage your group to use Grace Connect and upload phone numbers, emails, birthdates, etc., so everyone can stay in touch and be able to communicate and celebrate one another.

The LEAD App is a mobile version of Grace Connect available only to group leaders and is the easiest way to take group attendance.

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QUESTIONS

The Small Group Team, staff, and pastors are here to help you if questions arise that you can't answer. Just say, "I'm not sure of the answer, but I will find out and let you know next week." People appreciate honesty.

For really tough subjects, invite a Christian Education Pastor to your group for a question and answer session.

Contact ChristianEducation@gracechurchco.com with any topics or questions you need help with.