

HOW TO PREVENT & SOLVE COMMON PROBLEMS | FOR GROUP LEADERS

You can never plan for all circumstances, but discussion ahead of time can help prevent problems before they occur, and make solving them a smoother process.

Frustrations About Children

You may want to write up an agreement about childcare after you have discussed all of the suggested topics with your group, and then have all of the parents in your group sign the agreement. If you have not set goals up front and you experience problems, you will need to bring it up in a meeting and set some guidelines to resolve the concerns.

Be sure to have defined rules for the children. However, don't set too many rules, as the kids will not be able to remember them. We suggest overarching rules with a positive emphasis, such as "keep your hands/body to yourself" rather than "don't kick" or "don't touch others". Rules such as "be kind" will cover a multitude of situations, and can be understood by children of all ages. If you have a babysitter, make sure they know the rules and how to express them correctly to the children. If you have a particular situation or child at the root of a problem, sit down with the parent(s) alone and discuss possible solutions in a loving manner.

Childcare topics to discuss upfront:

- Accessible areas of the home
- Curriculum or activities
- Snacks for kids
- Babysitter and pay rate per child
 - Who is responsible to secure the babysitter and ensure payment
- How discipline will take place
- Clean up
- Parents' responsibility level for their own child(ren), even if it means missing part of the study

Fights among members

During group time, members may have disagreements about topics and that's okay. We learn from hearing other people's options. Encourage all group members to be kind and listen to others, even if they have a different opinion.

Understand this, my beloved brothers and sisters. Let everyone be quick to hear [be a careful, thoughtful listener], slow to speak [a speaker of carefully chosen words and], slow to anger [patient, reflective, forgiving];

James 1:19 (AMP)

In general, it is best to avoid volatile issues, such as politics. As the group host you will come to know what topics are precarious in your group, and you can ask members to avoid those topics if they are causing tension.

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If the disagreement is over a theological topic, let the group members know you will contact the Christian Education Team to get their input on the topic. You can email them at ChristianEducation@gracechurchco.com and share their response at your next meeting.

If a group member has a dispute with another group member, encourage the members to first try and work it out by themselves. They should not involve other group members, as gossip and triangulation in our groups should be avoided at all costs.

Refuse to get involved in inane discussions; they always end up in fights. God's servant must not be argumentative, but a gentle listener and a teacher who keeps cool, working firmly but patiently with those who refuse to obey. You never know how or when God might sober them up with a change of heart and a turning to the truth, enabling them to escape the Devil's trap, where they are caught and held captive, forced to run his errands.

2 Timothy 2:24-26 (MSG)

If they cannot come to an agreement, then the Host should intercede. Talk to members involved separate from the group to discuss the Biblical principles that should be applied. If the situation cannot be resolved with the Host's intervention, call the Small Groups Director to get support.

"If a fellow believer hurts you, go and tell him—work it out between the two of you. If he listens, you've made a friend. If he won't listen, take one or two others along so that the presence of witnesses will keep things honest, and try again. If he still won't listen, tell the church. If he won't listen to the church, you'll have to start over from scratch, confront him with the need for repentance, and offer again God's forgiving love.

Matthew 18:15-17 (MSG)

Members disgruntled with church, staff, or pastors

Discuss with the members involved, separately from the group, their Biblical responsibility to talk to the person involved. They can contact the Small Groups Director who can assist them in working with the church staff to resolve the issue. In most cases, a simple conversation can result in a pleasant and peaceable resolution.

Discourage them from discussing their concerns with other members, causing a negative effect on the group and within the body of Christ.

*For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord.
Live as children of light...*

Ephesians 5:8 (NIV)

How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity!

Psalms 133:1 (NIV)

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Questions you can't answer

Be honest and tell them that you are not certain of the answer, but you will find the answer and get back with them. Email the Christian Education Team at ChristianEducation@gracechurchco.com. They can answer your questions and even come and teach your group if your group has a lot of questions about a specific part of the Bible or topic.

Salvation issues

Refer to *How to Share the Gospel*, which can be found in your *Small Group Members Guide* and on the Grace website. If you have additional questions, please email the Christian Education Team at ChristianEducation@gracechurchco.com.

Doctrinal issues

Refer to our *Statement of Faith*, which can be found in our *Small Group Members Guide* and on the Grace website. If you have additional questions, please email the Christian Education Team at ChristianEducation@gracechurchco.com.

Inconsistency

Call the member to encourage their participation and tell them they are missed and needed. Discuss possible scheduling alternatives, if necessary.

So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.

1 Corinthians 10:31 (NIV)

Latecomers

Start your group on time; waiting for latecomers only perpetuates the problem and disregards those who were on time.

Running out of room

- Approach your members about a possible alternate meeting location.
- If your group becomes too large to physically fit in someone's home, you should consider breaking into 2 separate groups. You can meet as 2 groups for your Small Group time and then continue to all meet together for larger fellowship activities.

Summer schedules & holidays

- Plan ahead.
- Look at your calendars periodically to anticipate schedule conflicts and make alternate plans.
- Avoid prolonged periods of down time. A broken routine is always hard to get restarted.

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Someone struggling with obvious sin

- Handle them with love.
- Be careful not to jump on a situation that spiritual maturity will address. Remember that new Christians do not have the discernment and wisdom that comes with spending time with Jesus.
- Use your discretion and do not allow the sin to affect or infect the group.
- In private, lovingly share with the member the Biblical principle they are violating and the consequences you are trying to prevent.
- Encourage them, pray with them, and if needed, call the Small Groups Director to meet with you and them.
- Don't allow your group to gossip about the situation.

For this is what the Sovereign Lord says: I myself will search for my sheep and look after them. As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness.

Ezekiel 34:11-12 (NIV)

Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit. When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord" - and you forgave the guilt of my sin.

Psalms 32:1-5 (NIV)

Gossip

- Gossip is dangerous and will kill a group.
- Don't allow direct or casual conversations that includes gossip.
- Speak to the problem individually or as a group, as necessary.
- Some people disguise gossip as a prayer request. Remember that everything shared in a group remains in the group, even prayer requests. As the group host, if you feel the request is serious, ask the person who needs prayer before sharing the request, even with church staff.
- Use your study time as an opportunity to teach Biblical principles such as this, as much as possible.

Gossip betrays a confidence; so avoid a man who talks too much.

Proverbs 20:19 (NIV)

Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart.

1 Peter 1:22 (NIV)