

# Conducting the Small Group Meeting

## **WELCOME:** How to Lead the Ice Breaker

- Basic guidelines:
  - Make it natural—don't just say, "the icebreaker for tonight is..."  
Instead, just ask the question as a part of the conversation.
  - Answer the question in a circle—this facilitates participation by all group members
  - Whoever asks the question answers it first—this sets a pattern for others to follow.
  
- Find an icebreaker that will work for your group.
  - Use light-hearted get acquainted questions for new groups
  - For more established groups, ask deeper questions.
  - Do not ask questions which allows someone to hijack the meeting
  - If children are present include them.
  - When someone new is present help make them feel comfortable;  
never force someone to answer the icebreaker
  - Never ask a threatening question
  
- Potential icebreakers:

- Who was your hero when you were a child?
  - Who was your best friend when you were a teenager? Do you stay in touch now?
  - What is your favorite color? Why?
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- Helps for finding icebreakers—see appendix

## **WORSHIP: How to Lead in Worship and Prayer**

### **1. Leading the Prayer time**

- **Model it**
  - Be a person of prayer yourself—privately pray for your members, the lost, ask God for direction in leading the CARE group.
  - Model the appropriate kind of prayer
  - When you do pray out loud in the group, keep your prayers honest, authentic, and from the heart. (Don't dominate the group prayer time—encourage others)
  - Follow a simple guide for small group prayer:
    - ✓ Short
    - ✓ Simple
    - ✓ Spirit-led
    - ✓ Silence is acceptable
- **Keep it Safe**
  - Don't call on someone to pray unless you know them well or have asked permission beforehand.
  - Don't expect everyone to pray every meeting
  - Allow members to pray as they feel led or inspired

- Respect people's confidentiality—never expose someone's need to others in the group without their permission
- Respect the intimacy level—as the group grows in relationships a deeper level of trust will foster more genuine prayer.
- **Guide the Prayer**
  - Give the group general guidelines for prayer, but let the Holy Spirit lead
  - Avoid lengthy discussions on prayer or prior to praying
  - Include prayer each time you meet
  - Encourage conversational prayer
  - Intercede for the world, nation, community and CRC.
  - Pray for your leaders including Pastors Courtney and Janeen McBath. I Timothy 2:1-3
  - People requesting prayer should be seated on a chair in the center of the group or stand up and have the group gather around them. This will encourage younger Christians to pray and keep the focus of the prayers on target.

*“For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of His will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding.” Colossians 1:9*

- **Use Creative Ideas for Prayer**
  - Rather than ask for requests and assigning someone else to pray for the need, have each person pray for their own request.
  - Ask for members to come with written prayer requests or have them write them down before praying. The group then gathers around the person(s) who made the request. Leader asks for a volunteer to pray and/or invites a specific person to pray. Others agree in prayer.
  - Keep a record of prayer needs and results.
  - Break down into smaller groups of two, three, or four for more total involvement in the prayer life of the group. This is necessary when the size of the group increases.
  - Model the “Power of the Blessing” principle by having the group stand and join hands in agreement. Have everyone pray at the same time for

the blessing and edification of the person on the right and then, when you announce it over the sounds of their praying, have them pray for the person on their left for blessing and edification.

- If someone prays for another and the Holy Spirit leads you to also pray, it is encouraging and reassuring to begin with "I agree with my brother/sister, and...."
- Pass out a list of various areas to pray for before smaller groups break down for prayer. Especially keep before the people our missionaries, leaders, and various areas of ministry in the church.
- Teach on using the Lord's prayer as a model of prayer and teach how to pray a personalized psalm
- Pray the scriptures and then pray short prayers around the theme of that verse.

## **2. Leading the Worship time**

- Sing songs of praise and worship
  - 2-3 songs only
  - You may choose to sing acapella, appoint someone to lead with guitar, or use a CD or tape.
  - Don't allow this portion to drag or die.
  - Remember, small group worship will always be distinctively different from large corporate worship.

### 3. Lead by Following the Holy Spirit

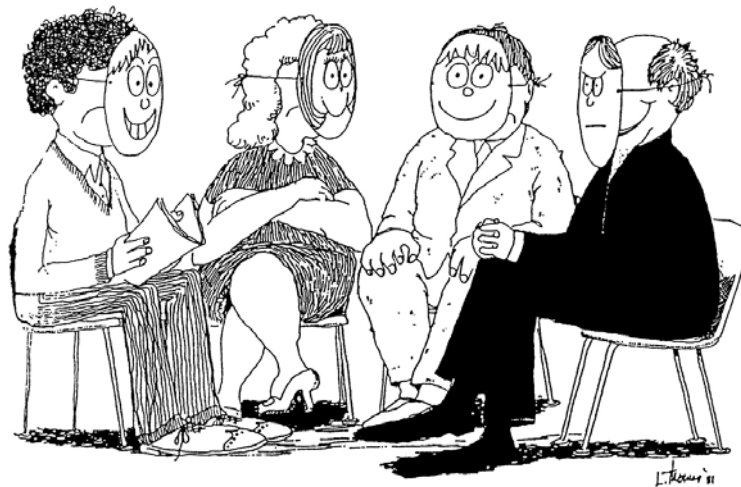
- Pray for the Holy Spirit's direction.
- The Word promises His presence when you gather.
  - *"When two or three of you gather together, there I am in the midst of you."* Matthew 18:20
- Ask yourself these questions:
  - Where is God leading the group tonight?
  - What is the Holy Spirit doing in the group tonight?
  - In what way am I to lead the group? What can I do to allow God to move supernaturally in our group?

### **WORD:** How to Lead a Discussion

#### Overview

1. Flow into edification time from worship time
2. Facilitate, don't teach.
  - Teaching: *the leader does all the talking.*
  - Facilitating: *the leader gets the people to talk.*
  - The goal is to facilitate the ministry in the group, not to have the leader "do" all the ministry.
  - When you facilitate, allow God to work through the group
  - When small group leaders are facilitating well, they often speak only 30% of the time
3. The focus will be on application of the most recent sermon from Sunday's service.
  - CARE Meeting Guidelines will be distributed to leaders during the monthly LITES gathering. It may also be downloaded from the CRC website.
4. Facilitate application, not information, during the WORD portion of the meeting.
  - Most people know more Bible information than they practice.
  - The CARE group is where people apply the Word to their lives.
  - If the discussion does not lead to the implementation of truth, then it has failed.

5. Discussion and sharing.  
In facilitating the discussion and sharing, lead the people to applications that are:
  - Personal
  - Specific
  - Practical
  
6. Discussion and sharing should lead to a time of ministry of prayer focusing on the needs which have been shared.



*We all wear masks!*

## **Procedures**

1. Read the Scripture passage for the sermon.
  
2. Ask “discovery” questions.  
Basically the questions are to help the group recall the basic outline of the message. At this point the cell leader can be directive. It should last only a few minutes. Examples of such questions are:
  - What was the main idea of last week’s message?
  - What are the three main points that surfaced in the sermon?Seek to state the points of the sermon in simple timeless principles. This will enable a newcomer to participate because he(she) can then make simple applications in line with the timeless biblical principle.

3. Ask open-ended “understanding” questions.

Ask questions which would help the group to a greater understanding of the points mentioned in the sermon. Keep this portion short since it is based on what is already taught in the sermon. Examples of questions are:

- What were some of the examples pastor gave to illustrate the points?
- Were there any new insights into this passage/topic/points raised? Did you learn something new?

*NOTE: Stay within the interpretation of the sermon. If there is any disagreement, please do not try to explain it away or start an argument. It may be probably one or two people in the group who have a problem. Suggest discussing it outside cell meeting. Otherwise your other cell members may become confused. Flow along with what is taught. Then inform your CDL.*

4. Probe for application.

This is the main focus of the discussion. The bulk of the time should be spent on this section. Each person must have the opportunity to share. At this point, you may decide to break the group into two's or three's and get them to share with each other on a more personal level. However, do not have too much movement. Just have them turn around to the person nearest to them and talk. If the group is able to share openly, go around and have each person share his(her) response. The leader should recede in their leadership at this juncture and allow the Holy Spirit to move each person to share openly. Try to release ministry in the light of the sharing. The leader needs to be alert to obvious needs which can be met with “on-the-spot” ministry. Examples of questions are:

- Of the three or four points in the sermon, which one touched you most?
- What is one area in your life which God is telling you to work on?
- Share a struggle in your life which God surfaced due to Sunday's sermon.
- Share a new insight you have learned and would like to see in your life.
- How will you integrate the biblical principles in your lifestyle?

5. Transition with prayer for each other—focus on the need to walk out the lessons learned.

*“Therefore encourage one another and build each other up...”*

I Thessalonians 5:11

## Benefits of Group Discussion

- Discussion promotes action
  - Makes them doers of the Word [James 1:22]
  - Applying scriptural principles to life. [Matthew 7:24]
- Discussion develops boldness to witness and explain their faith.
- Discussion promotes openness.
- Discussion inspires spiritual growth.
- Discussion provides reinforcement and clarification.
- Discussion develops new insights.
- Discussion develops self-esteem.
- Discussion provides the leader with clues on how to minister to the needs of member

## Successful Discussion Dynamics

Rule #1—Use the ACTS principles

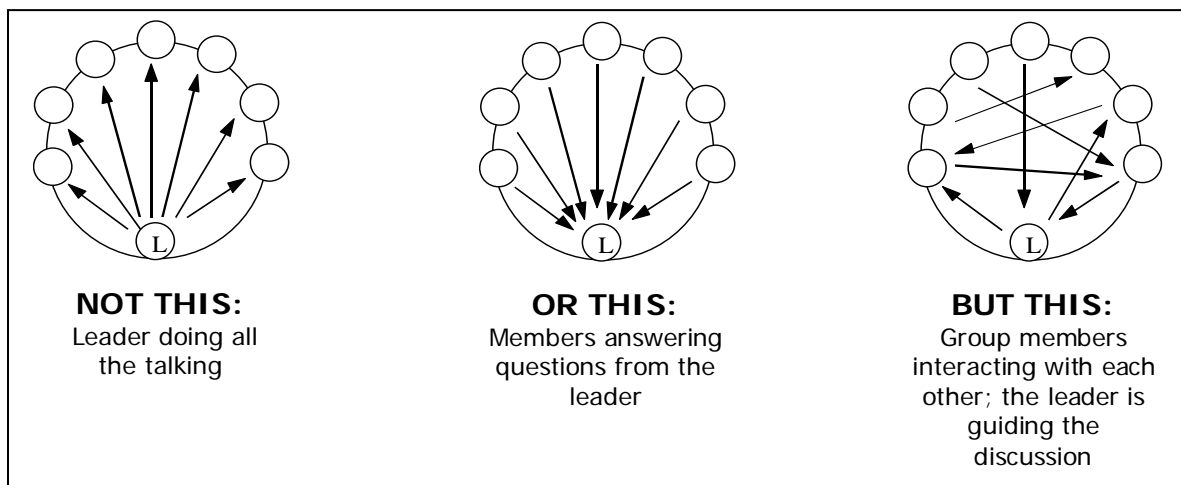
- **A-Acknowledging** everyone who speaks during the discussion.
- **C-Clarify** what is being said.
- **T-Taking** it to the group—don't try to be the answer person.
- **S-Summarizing** what has been said

Rule #2—Use the questions provided in the CARE Group Meeting Guideline

- These questions have been developed with an eye towards effective discussion and appropriate application of Pastor's sermons
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Rule #3—Learn to be a good listener.

Rule #4—Aim for maximum participation.





### **SHARE AND PRAYER:**

This portion is also to be used to encourage the participants to share from their life experiences.

- The leader must facilitate this time and help to involve people in the sharing time.
- Beware of members dominating the discussion
- Use this portion as a way to open up people to receive prayer.
- The leader's transparency will encourage others to open up.

### **WITNESS: How to Lead the Witness Section**

Small groups which are allowed to become inward and introspective will become unhealthy. During the Witness portion, spend time helping the members to focus on evangelism—this is the Outward emphasis. CARE leaders must keep reminding the group that its mission and vision is to reach out to the community.

- Spend time in the CARE meeting to pray for the lost.
  - Pray for unreached friends, family and neighbors
  - Pray for the neighborhood around the host home.
  - Pray for upcoming outreaches, services, and special CARE group harvest events
- Make your CARE group visitor-friendly
  - Make your meetings consistent; time, location, frequency
  - If you move the location of the meeting make sure there is communication with potential newcomers
  - Provide quality care and/or ministry to children

- Keep the group small—newcomers feel left out if the group size gets too large.
- Make newcomers feel comfortable
- Follow up on all newcomers—call them or send them a card immediately following their visit

*“Every small group needs to be involved in some form of evangelism to remain healthy.”*  
Steve Sjogren

- Mobilize group to reach out to the lost
  - Encourage each member to build relationships with their unreached friends, family and neighbors.
  - Make a Target list of pre-Christian friends, family and neighbors. Encourage focused prayer and relationship building activities.
  - Plan regular harvest events designed to reach the lost; e.g., picnics, prayer walks in your neighborhood, servant evangelism, block parties.
  - Be prepared to share the gospel with interested pre-Christians.

## **WARMTH: Guidelines for the Fellowship Time**

Celebration is always the culmination of a time of victory. Here are some guidelines for a successful conclusion to your CARE meeting.

- Limit refreshments to light snacks and drinks. Do not overdo!
- No red drinks (especially Kool-Aid). They stain everything!
- If you have a small group (6-8), then one person can bring the snack. Any more than 8 (including children) and everyone should bring something to share.
- Your host home does not have to provide a snack. If they provide anything (as if they're not providing enough already), let it be the drinks.
- When you have visitors to the group, make sure that everyone talks to them during the fellowship time. It is no time for cliques—show yourself friendly!
- If you have children in your group, fix plates for them and give them a place to sit for their snacks. Don't allow a free-for-all at the snack table.
  
- If you have a large group, don't leave it to your host to clean up everything. You may even want to have a signup for clean up duty. Remember, your host is a very important person, you don't want to wear them out!
- This is the time when your signup sheet for the next CARE meeting responsibilities is filled out. You and/or your apprentice should ensure it is getting filled out and draw attention to it before people start leaving.
- You must take the lead in getting people to leave. It is very common for people to stay at the host home for hours after the meeting is over. Of course sometimes this is okay, but most times it is not, especially if your host has young children. Be respectful of your host and get people out at your agreed upon time.
- Some groups desire to put fellowship at the beginning of their meeting. This is often the case to accommodate people who are always late. It can work, but it is often just as difficult to get people away from the food and into the meeting.
- Frequently, significant ministry will take place during the fellowship time.