

## How to Handle Childcare for Small Groups

Below are a series of options you can use for handling childcare needs in a small group:

**1. Have the Kids Join In.** Some groups are content to embrace the chaos and allow kids of all ages to be present at the group! The pro of this option is that families have more "hang out" time together and become familiar with one another quickly. It is also free, and often fun. The con is that the chaos which ensues makes it difficult to have deep conversations and take relationships to the next level in the context of the group meeting itself.

**2. Share Babysitting Costs.** Probably the most frequent option that groups use is to share the cost of a babysitter at each meeting. The pros of this option are that it is easy to simply transfer responsibility to a separate caregiver, allowing every member of the group to fully focus during the small group meeting. The cons are that it can become expensive over time and you can find yourself in a bind if the babysitter cannot make it on a particular week. Sometimes it can also be difficult to find a babysitter at all.

**3. Rotate Caregiving.** Members can rotate caregiving from week to week, meaning that a different person or couple would be on babysitting duty each week. The pros of this are that it is free and it allows group members to get to know one another's children - not a bad thing! The cons are that some group members might be reluctant to watch children - this is especially the case in married couples groups, where some of the group members might have no children at all. In addition, a major con is that the entire group is never together - every week someone must miss out who is on babysitting duty.

**4. Men & Women Split.** One innovative model has been to meet three times in one month - during week one the entire family meets (and the chaos is embraced!); during week two the women only meet; during week three the men only meet. The fourth week is off. The pros of this are many: families get to know each other and hang out together, the men and the women get to develop deep and meaningful relationships with one another; there is good variety of experience over the course of the month; and no money is spent. The main con is that this system of scheduling can be tricky for some people.

**5. Have Older Kids Care for Younger Kids.** Obviously, this only works if you have children old enough to care for the younger ones.

**6. Consider Joining Different Groups.** Having a family with young children is a very challenging life stage. Instead of being in a group together with your spouse, you might consider having

each spouse join different groups for a season - for example the husband in a men's group, the wife in a women's group. The con is obviously that a shared experience between the husband and wife is lost, but the major pro is that this ensures that both spouses receiving meaningful soul care and fellowship outside of the home during a very challenging period of life.