

## **Essential Elements for Great Group Dynamics**

### **Food & Fun:**

It's often the times around food and fun that break down walls of self-protection. Don't dismiss the value of just 'being' together, laughing, sharing stories, and having fun. Including a special social event each semester is a welcomed break.

### **Worship:**

Starting your gathering with a short worship set of 1-2 songs will noticeably change the dynamic of the rest of your session. Whether you prefer to use a CD, an iPod playlist, or live guitar, be sure to provide lyrics to everyone if it's an unfamiliar song.

### **Prayer:**

Prayer is fundamental to growing in our intimacy with God, and as a group leader, part of your leadership charge includes maintaining high expectations of your group's ability to continually go deeper in prayer. Intentionally scheduling a portion of your group time for prayer, not simply sharing prayer requests at the end of your gathering, will help you see growth in this spiritual discipline among your group members.

### **Icebreakers:**

A short icebreaker question is a great way to transition into your discussion topic. Your goal is simply to get people to open up and start talking and the more fun the question, the more relaxed they become! Often, the icebreaker will relate to some point you will later make in the group session, but again... keep it light!

### **Facilitating Discussions:**

Leading a Small Group is more about encouraging everyone's participation, than it is about teaching on a topic. Take a look at these suggested ratios. The leader should spend only 20% of their time talking, while investing 80% of their time listening and keeping the conversation flowing. Additionally, most groups will experience at least one occasion of a group member launching off into a random topic that needs to be redirected. While your group members will look to you to bring them back from needless rabbit trails, be sure to handle any redirect moments with your group with grace.

### **Shepherding:**

Small Group Leaders are viewed as an extension of the pastoral staff. How you shepherd and care for your group is therefore, in essence, a pastoral response. Grace, compassion, care, and prayer, combined with a phone call or hand-written note mid-semester will go far to assure your group members will feel well cared for.

**Serving:** One of the truest marks of a disciple of Christ is their willingness to serve others. And serving alongside others you know always enhances the experience! There are numerous ways to serve – in your group, in the church, or in our community.

**Love, Acceptance and Forgiveness:** Your ability to offer the forgiveness of God through the blood of Christ is one of your most valuable assets as a spiritual leader. There is tremendous

power and depth in the forgiveness you share with someone weighed down by brokenness and guilt. Scripture is replete with passages that bring hope and healing. As leader, it would be helpful to be familiar a sampling of passages.

**Crisis Care:** No one is ever really prepared when an unexpected crisis hits. Whether a flooded house, a medical emergency, or a death in the family, your group's willingness to step in and take action to ease the pain, relieve the pressure or assist with practical care, is a testimony to what Jesus calls us to do in the Body of Christ. If you need guidance in how to respond to a specific situation, contact your pastoral staff.

**Sharing Leadership:** When you share leadership opportunities with others in your group, you not only ease the strain on you as the sole leader, but you are also able to observe and identify prospective future leader/apprentice candidates.