

BEST PRACTICES

FIND AND FOLLOW COMMUNITY GROUP LEADERS

ICEBREAKERS

- Open every meeting with an icebreaker.
- Use a question of the week (What was your worst Christmas present ever?).
- Two Truths and a Lie: have the group members share two things true about themselves and then one thing that is not true. The other members have to guess which one is the “lie.”
- The M&M game: dump a handful of M&Ms in a paper bag. The group members reach in and grab one M&M; each color has its own question that the member has to share. (Examples: How old were you when you had your first kiss? Tell the group about your first car. What is your greatest Christmas gift you got as a child?)

FOOD

- Make food a part of every community group meeting- could be heavy appetizers or a full meal.
- If doing a full meal, use theme nights to guide your planning (Mexican, Italian, Soup and Salad, etc.).

BUILDING COMMUNITY

- Early in the group, assign roles for the group (Social Coordinator, Babysitting Coordinator, Meal Planner, Community Outreach Coordinator, etc.)
- On the fourth week have game night or social outing (could be board games, video games, etc.)
- Have regular celebration nights where leaders focus on how each person has grown in their faith over the course of the group.
- Celebrate growth with small gifts that symbolize their growth, books or just handwritten notes.
- As a leader, it's your job to foster community with the people in your group. Do something social with every person in your group outside of normal group time.
- As a leader, when you are talking to a group member about something that you know another group member could relate to, invite the other group member to join the discussion and then excuse yourself so the group members are primed to have a conversation separate from you.
- Take an interest in the lives of your group members. Attend their school or hobby activities to support them.
- Get away together. Trips could include snow skiing, the beach, a lake, or a marriage retreat.
- Host bridal/baby showers for group members. Assist new parents by taking meals and make hospital visits when necessary.

DISCUSSION

- Make sure discussion time is cell phone/blackberry free.
- Do not put anyone on the spot. Ask for volunteers to read aloud or pray. If no one volunteers, then the coach takes on that role.
- Ask open-ended questions that will help the group engage in conversation.
- For a particularly difficult topic, talk to a group member ahead of time about having an answer to a certain question already prepared.
- Always sacrifice the discussion if a group member has a pertinent need. Take the time to focus on that group member through prayer and encouragement.
- Be sensitive to the Holy Spirit, and feel freedom to stray from the discussion questions if the Spirit is moving within your group.
- Start and end on time.

PRAYER

- Make a commitment to pray regularly for your group members.
- Break off into men and women to pray separately- it fosters increased openness.
- Have a prayer and praise book where group members can record their prayer needs.
- Email prayer and praise details to the group members after meeting.
- Prayer time should be about close friends and family, not just acquaintances.
- Share prayer requests on index cards to send home to pray for members throughout the week.