

BEST PRACTICES

More than reading a book together or completing 6 lessons in a Bible study, each leader has the opportunity to invest in the lives of others and build relationships to help members take a next step in their relationship with Christ. Leaders are facilitators—someone who fosters relationships and creates environments for members to grow. Keep these practices in mind as you lead, but do not be discouraged if you are not able to accomplish every one. Through your season of leading, you will grow just like you encourage growth in your members.

SET GOALS

Have a vision for where you would like your group/table to grow relationally and spiritually.

- What is the WHY for your group/table?

Your Groups Coach and CF Staff are available to help plan and pray with you about the development and growth of your group/table – let us partner with you.

BE PREPARED FOR YOUR GROUP MEETINGS or CLASSES

Review the study or Scripture that your Group/Class will be focusing on each week.

- Preview the upcoming session and think through how you will use your meeting time to include components of ESPN – Encouragement, Scripture, Prayer and Next Steps.
- If you are using video based content, watch the video in advance and make notes on key areas to discuss.
- If your study includes a Discussion Guide, review the questions in advance and select questions that you believe will best generate conversation with your group/table.

PRAY

Pray over your meeting space and pray for each group/table member by name. Be specific and boldly expect God to impact each life.

CONNECT WITH YOUR GROUP/TABLE MEMBERS DURING THE WEEK

Use the Chat feature on the Christ Fellowship website or App or another chat app. Let group/table members know you look forward to seeing them. See if they have any prayer requests or questions in accessing resources on the App or website. Be prepared to celebrate birthdays, anniversaries and special life events in your group.

PREPARE THE ENVIRONMENT

Whether your group/class meets in person or online, you are creating an atmosphere for people to grow. The environment should feel Warm, Safe, Fun, and Inspirational.

In Person Groups/Classes:

- Arrange for refreshments in advance - this is a great way to include group members who might like to purchase/prepare items for the group to enjoy.
- Make sure the meeting space is clean. Remove clutter that could be a distraction.

- Set your phone to silent or “do not disturb” and minimize other possible distractions.
- If you’re in a home with pets, secure them in a separate room.
- Consider if there’s anything that might trigger allergies or be otherwise unpleasant to participants:
 - Plan the right lighting and temperature.
 - If you have children meeting in a separate space, make sure their environment is warm and inviting.
- Class leaders can ensure that an Attendance sheet is at the table.

Virtual Groups:

- Login to Zoom and ensure the meeting link is functioning and you have proper lighting.
- Set your phone to silent or “do not disturb” and minimize other possible distractions.
- If you’re in a home with pets, secure them in a separate room.
- If you are watching a video together, take some time before the meeting to make sure you are able to share the screen and sound quickly and easily. It is also a good idea to download the video to your computer instead of streaming so that you do not experience buffering or glitches in the feed.

Public Spaces: If you are meeting in a public space, arrive early and ensure the environment is set up and clean for your time together. Keep in mind you may need to reserve a room or space in advance based on the location. Then, remember to always leave a space better than you found it.

30 MINUTES BEFORE EACH SESSION

In Person Groups/Classes:

Be ready to welcome people as they arrive. Consider playing background music to create energy in the room. This is a great time to share snacks and spend time with group members.

Virtual groups:

Start your Zoom session a few minutes prior to the start time, and spend time with group members as they arrive online. This is key to building relationships.

FOR EACH SESSION

- Start on time. Open with Prayer.
- Preface each meeting with sharing the session theme and what you prayerfully expect the impact to be.
- Acknowledge and affirm each person’s input, calling them by name.
- Anticipate questions and think through how you can jump-start the conversation with personal examples if needed.
- Ask open-ended questions that will draw people into the discussion.



- If you are using a discussion guide, don't feel as if you must ask every question; use your judgment as to what is best for the group.
- Look for affinity between group/table members and help build deeper connections.
- Act on what you notice – be an active observer, note-taker, and first responder to what is happening in the lives of your group members.
- Connect people with responsibilities that match their gifting and interests (to lift your load, help the group, and enable others to take a next step using their gifts and talents).
- Finish on time.
- Class table leaders can coordinate with CF Staff or the class Facilitator on the collection of completed Attendance sheets each week.

ALWAYS USE ESPN IN YOUR GROUP MEETINGS

These elements will keep the members of your group/table growing along the way and should be included in every group meeting:

<p>Encouragement Scripture Prayer Next Steps</p>	<p>Even in groups that gather to do an activity together, including encouragement through Scripture and Prayer creates an environment that members will want to keep coming back to. None of these pieces need to be long or profoundly deep, simply sharing how you have been encouraged through God's Word/People this week will be an encouragement to others.</p>
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BUILD COMMUNITY

Create a way for your group/table members to get to know each other better. Take advantage of the chat feature that is included in your group management via the Christ Fellowship website or App. Plan additional events like a fun, purely social outing to build friendships or consider a "serve experience" the group can take on. Incorporate fun activities that promote learning and serving.

AFTER EACH SESSION

Follow up with group members who didn't attend and let them know they were missed:

- Summarize the meeting with them.
- Ask them if you can pray for them about anything.

