



## Building Great Groups

Your effectiveness as a group leader has more to do with your authenticity, willingness to invest in other people, and having a teachable spirit than how much experience you have. No matter how long you have been leading, you can take steps to create an environment that's conducive to great conversations and growth for everyone in the group.

### Trust Your Role

Ultimately, the Holy Spirit facilitates the growth and learning that take place in your group. You are the conduit that helps bring the growth out, so let that truth eliminate pressure that the conversation rests on you.

### Approach Each Group Meeting Differently

There's a learning curve figuring out what works and what doesn't work for every group. Good leaders embrace being flexible each time they meet. The group may need to focus on 1-2 questions - so it's OK if you don't cover all of them. Be willing to change the format - you may start with an extended time of prayer one week followed by discussion of the lesson rather than starting with the lesson each week.

### Encourage but Don't Demand

Group members may stop showing up if they get behind on homework, typically around week 3. If they don't feel like they can contribute to the conversation, they may not attend. Consider a flexible approach to engage people in conversation by asking "what do you think?" rather than "what did you write down?" so people continue to participate and attend.

### Invest in People

Group time is more than just reading a book and discussing questions. When you encourage your group to grow in their relationship with God and each other - you're on the right track. Sometimes this means spending time getting to know each other or praying for a group member experiencing a difficult season. Be sensitive to the atmosphere of the group each time you meet.

### Explore What People are Learning More than What They Already Know

People can feel like outsiders when the discussion seems like everyone else knows all the answers. The questions you ask help create an environment where everyone can feel like they belong and are a part of the conversation - learning from God's Word and each other.

### Ask Yourself the Questions You Plan to Ask the Group

If you find a question awkward or difficult to answer, the group probably will too. You don't have to use every question in the book and can adapt questions to facilitate discussion.

### Embrace Silence

Some questions require considerable thought before people answer. Resist the urge to rush the process by breaking the silence with your personal response or quickly moving on to the next question. Embrace a moment or two of silence.

### Trust the Group

Encourage group members to highlight meaningful truths or key points from the lesson and share them with the group. Then let their thoughts and questions help guide the conversation.

### Ask Questions that Prompt Discussion

Be sure your questions create space for more than a "yes" or "no" response and allow group members to share their insights and thoughts. Try "What did you think?" "What was new?" or "What had the greatest impact?"

### Be Authentic

Don't ask questions of your group that you're not willing to answer. Your group members want to know the real you, but also need a leader. Find the balance between being vulnerable, which helps others trust and share, and over-sharing.

### Pray Big Prayers

Prayer is at the center of our relationship with Jesus as well as at the foundation of our groups. Pray before you meet for each group member and for the discussion; pray during your time together; and encourage your group members to pray for each other outside of the time together. And then watch what God does in the lives of your group members.