

# Friendship groups

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**Practical training**  
**Leading a Meeting**

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Building High-impact  
Friendship groups

**F o r e r u n n e r**  
**c h r i s t i a n**  
**F e l l o w s h i p**

**Friendship groups**  
**Practical training**  
**Leading a**  
**Meeting**



## reFlection

Have you ever lead a 'small group' meeting? What was your biggest challenge? Favorite part of leading?



## reFlection

What do you see as the most difficult aspect of leading a Friendship group meeting?

Shared  
Leadership

### SoMething to Consider

people do not like to go  
'Your' group.... they love  
going to 'their' group.

## Shared Leadership Leads to Ownership

possible roles...

Host

snacks

ministry coordinator

discussion/Facilitator

outreach coordinator

communication officer

recruiter

lead lord's supper

**Meeting  
Preparations**

# Leading a Meeting Format

Bible discussion	group discussion/application	30 minutes
Build relationships	share about our lives (victories & pressures)	30 minutes
minister to one another	pray and speak blessings over one another	20 minutes
plan/pray for outreach	We plan, report, and pray for the group's upcoming outreach	10 minutes

## Meeting Preparations

Just pretend that 12-15 of your best friends are coming over! Well, in a few months that is what it **Will** feel like. **t**he point is make sure that the people who come understand that you are 'thrilled' they have decided to join you for the evening!

**t**hink through the flow of the meeting:

What are you trying to accomplish tonight. **t**he suggested breakdown of the meeting is just that...a suggestion. some nights you will want more relationship building; some discussion; and some outreach or ministry. **t**hink through what you sense the **L**ord wants to do with the group this night and put a format together.

arrangements

seating arrangement

refreshments

limited distractions

**W**elcome!

**s**W**e**at acronym

smile

Welcome

energy

accommodating

**t**hankful

Be punctual! (respect)

**Building  
Relationship**

**Building Relationship**

**eat together**

Food!  
snacks  
meals together  
evening out together

**Laugh together**

When conversation and laughter fill the air...let it happen...it is important  
plan for unplanned time to visit and connect  
plan 'fun nights'; the main goal is laughter and to enjoy each other's company

**cry together**

don't be surprised when people open up about their lives and the challenges  
they are facing and tears start to flow. it is a good thing; not a bad thing  
When people share their stories; sometimes tears will be part of the story...it is a good  
thing. don't try and take the uncomfortable feeling away...let it be shared by the  
group.

**Problem solve/strategize together**

if a person or family is in crisis...brainstorm how the group might respond  
if the fellowship is struggling with things...talk about how the group could respond  
talk about how the group/meetings are going. What would we change? What is miss-  
ing? What is going well?

**share history**

one of the best ways to build relationship is to share history with one another.  
share Questions  
time for individuals to share testimony  
check in on how the week has gone; how life is going

**Plan/work/accomplish together**

see outreach  
think through a special project that one of the group members might need.

**one on one time to Build intimacy**

schedule time to for one on one time to really get to know each other

## Facilitating group discussion

the emphasis is not on teaching...but on helping the group do three things:

- 1) does everyone understand the topic?
- 2) What is the Lord saying to each member of the group?
- 3) How can each person apply to their life what the Lord is showing them

### Focus: application of Biblical truth

*It is not your role to be the smartest person in the room  
It is not your role to be the 'Shell Answer Person'  
It is not your role to answer all questions  
Help the group relate well together and apply biblical truth*

## tools of the trade

active listening



Observing & giving Feedback

Questions & probing



time Management

## Just do it!

lay hands on each other....pray for each other....out loud....often!

### Building Ministry into the group's genetic code

*Never* allow a meeting to end without praying for at least one person

take time to pray for each other

Speak blessings and scriptures over each other

as the Holy spirit leads; prophesy and encourage one another

lay hands on each other and ask Holy spirit to move upon them

Break into small groups of 4 to pray for each other

gather the whole group around one person/or couple to pray for them

When the Holy spirit moves on a person during discussion; stop right then and bless what God is doing and speak blessing upon them

invite a prophetic person/team to come minister to the group (Have your own Holy spirit ministry night)

practice words of knowledge and prophecy on each other (learn how to minister to each other by speaking out impressions)

take turns having a person share their testimony and then pray for that person when they finish

Friendship groups are the best place to learn how to flow with the Holy spirit in spiritual gifts. Faith is spelled r-i-s-k (John Wimber) Friendship groups are a safe place to practice and grow in ministry



Outreach

## Building outreach into the group's genetic code

the Lord wants to lead us to impact the world around us.

intercede for direction on who the Lord wants us to focus our outreach on  
acts of kindness; choose a group to bless with acts of kindness

servant evangelism; select a group that you sense the Lord wants you to  
impact and pray for direction on how we could love/serve that group (i.e.  
neighbors; people in need)

pray Walks; choose a neighborhood that the Lord wants you to focus on  
and schedule set times to pray as you walk around the area

cooperate with what Lenny Laguardia and his team are doing with neigh-  
borhood kids

Have each person in the group develop a list of people that they believe the  
Lord wants to bring into relationship and have targeted time of prayer and  
develop a strategy to reach out to the people on your list; hold one another  
accountable to follow through on those actions

Have a Zone party with 4-5 other small groups and target/invite people to  
bring to a fun/social event. Follow up on those that attend to come to  
Friendship group

## Serving the Lord's Supper

*“...The Lord Jesus, on the night He was betrayed, took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, “This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.” In the same way, after supper He took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me. For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes.” 1 Cor. 11: 23-26 (NIV)*

steps in serving communion (Have the bread and grape juice ready to be served.)

- 1.) open by sharing about god’s love, forgiveness, grace, mercy, commitment, tenderheartedness, faithfulness, etc., out of your personal journey. (connect with the story of the people in the room)
- 2.) read the passage: 1 cor. 11: 23-26. invite people to partake of the Lord’s supper
- 3.) share the exhortation to examine ourselves. (1 cor. 11:27-32) don’t take this lightly
- 4.) pray and pass the bread around the circle (could be time for quiet reflection, worship song)
- 5.) When everyone has been served, remind them that this represents Jesus’ broken body on thier behalf. simply state, Jesus said, “do this in remembrance of me.” Let us eat the bread together.
- 6.) then read the rest of the passage: “in the same way, after supper He took the cup, saying, this cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.”
- 7.) ask for the Lord’s blessing and ask all participants to drink the grape juice together.
- 8.) Have a short time of prayer or a worship song.

### Communion passages:

matthew 26:26-29

mark 14:22-25

Luke 22:14-20

1 cor. 10:16-21

1 cor. 11:17-34

## Overview

caring for your Friendship group members during sickness and major life events.

### Basic principles of hospital visits

When Friendship group members are hospitalized, it is an important time of ministry for Friendship group Leaders and the group. During these times of crisis, people are more open spiritually and they need the support, prayer, and ministry that the Friendship group and its members can offer.

As the Friendship group Leader, you are the primary pastoral minister to those in your Friendship group who are sick or hospitalized. At times your Zone pastor or district pastor will also be involved. But you are uniquely positioned to touch this person and their family through your personal ministry and the involvement of other Friendship group members.

People in the hospital are usually weak physically and emotionally. At these times in their lives, they need priestly ministry—that is, they need someone who can stand between them and God conveying His love and strength. We sometimes misunderstand the ‘priesthood of all believers,’ thinking that it means that none of us are priests. In fact, it means that all of us are priests. Sometimes I will need you to be a priest for me, and sometimes you will need me to be a priest for you.

When you visit someone in the hospital, your main goal is to let them know that you care and that God cares! If people feel loved and cared for, you’ve accomplished your major objective. When Friendship group Leaders are hospitalized, they need the ministry of the Zone pastors/district pastors.

### do’s

When you learn that someone in your Fg has been hospitalized because of a major illness or an unexpedited accident, contact them or their family as soon as possible. Tell them you are praying for them and that you will be involving the rest of the Fg in prayer.

Contact your Zp/dp to let them know who is hospitalized. Although you and your Fg will be offering the primary care, your Zp/dp will want to be informed and involved. As you plan your hospital visit, consider taking another Fg member with you. Jesus sent His disciples out to minister two by two because this is an effective pattern. This won’t always be possible, but when it is, it allows you to offer the gifts and support of someone else as they themselves learn new ministry skills.

Do more listening than talking when you visit. Look and listen for needs beyond the words people say. Sometimes it is not the person who is sick that is most in need. Many times it is other family members or friends.

Pray and lay hands on the person before you leave. Ask the Lord to move on their behalf and speak blessings and promises over them.

Ask how you can be a blessing to the family.

**Caring  
For  
People**

**don'ts**

don't thoughtlessly share stories about your own illnesses or experiences of those close to you.

don't say or imply that someone is sick because of their lack of faith.

don't stay too long. ten to fifteen minutes is plenty to bless; pray; and communicate how much you care about them.

don't be overwhelmed by the environment of the hospital. all of the machines and doctors and nurses can overwhelm you. remember: you are god's messenger of love; care, and healing.

don't violate hospital policies...how many in room or visiting hours.

**what if...someone is having surgery**

visit them earlier in the day or the evening before. in this way you will not be interrupted by or interfere with preparations for surgery.

consider sharing the Lord's supper with them.

pray psalms 121 to them: it recalls that god who watches out over them will not slumber or sleep.

**what if...someone is having a baby**

don't visit them immediately! give them a full day and a good nights sleep before your visit. ask if they want visitors at the hospital.

organize meals for the family; taking into consideration dietary needs; size of family; and how long the family would like the support.

**what if...someone is dying**

call you Zp/dp immediately, even if it is the middle of the night. they will want to be involved in ministry to the person and the family.

Listen and care for people, resisting the temptation to argue with negative emotions or feeling of denial or anger which are a natural part of the grief process.

sit with people. Just 'be there'. it's not just what you say, but your willingness to be there with them that communicates love and concern.

# CoMMon ProBlEMs

## overview

troubleshooting different issues that arise during leading a friendship group.

community occurs at a sufficient depth where everyone is heard and accepted in openness and honesty in the process of:

discovering the real self in relating to the Lord and His ministry

learning to be authentic (stopping games, putting down masks) in relating to others

the lifelong journey of becoming whole in the context of loving God and loving others

## common Leadership difficulties

### Burn out:

make sure you're being refreshed by God Himself, seeking Him for your needs. the bulk of burn out comes from not seeking God continually--His presence and power are our strength. Learn to do what God is doing in His power instead of doing everything in your own strength. there is great energy 'drain' if we have to 'get up' for meetings and attempt to be someone we are not. Learn to discern when to say 'no'. Your identity doesn't come from meeting every need. When you say 'no', provide alternatives. know when to call for reinforcements. Learn to relax and enjoy the meetings and the people. don't try and be responsible for everything.

trust God and draw the whole group into taking responsibility for what happens at the meetings.

Learn to play: You (and the group) need to get out and play together. plan social events & fun times.

involve everyone: recruit, train, and deploy others to share in the ministry. share leadership/facilitation.

make sure you encourage people with significant needs to get prayer on Weekend service ministry times.

Healing is a process; not an event! celebrate when you are feeling overwhelmed and unable to meet everyone's needs. You are unable! it keeps us humble and hungry. He is good at being Lord! and He loves doing it!

caution: taking responsibility for the health of others. only God can ultimately meet needs and people won't grow up in Him until they accept responsibility to seek Him for themselves.

### need to grow as a leader:

stay humble and hungry. participate in available training. ask Zp's and dp's for resources for areas you want to grow. Become more disciplined in your use of time. Be more focused in your use of study time. develop a personal development gameplan. communicate needs with our Zp and dp. our mission base has huge resources to tap into.

### unhealthy disclosure

don't be surprised in the course of your friendship group that you find someone who starts sharing information that is inappropriate. it is usually inappropriate in one of two ways. they share information about others that they should not be sharing, or they share and start to dominate the group with lots of information about themselves. When a person begins sharing in a non-productive way, here are some thoughts to consider:

allow them to participate while trying to discern if they are testing the group to find its acceptance level. if the person persists for a long time, they are probable not testing, but trying to dominate. Let the friendship group have an opportunity to participate in handling the problem. if your group is in a healthy place, they

will often be able to handle the problem in a loving way. remember, we do not want to damage the person, we really want to help.

often it will be necessary to take a person aside and speak to them privately regarding the problem. if you have a relationship with them, the success rate on an intervention is a lot higher and helping them is greatly enhanced. the opposite is also true. the apostle paul give us some great wisdom for these types of conversations; “ do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father. treat younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity.” 1 tim. 5:1-2

### **Personality conflicts**

some are of the opinion that a christian friendship group will have no difficulty with personality conflicts, uncharitable remarks, or boredom. truth is that won't come until the age to come. until then, we are going to have to work together on helping one another. the truth is we are all sinners and problems can be expected. one of the blessings of friendship groups is that it will bring out such behaviors. We will struggle living in community. true biblical community is 'supernatural'. it take god! Learning to relate well to each other is a key component to discipleship. many of us will struggle in the areas of personal interaction. the truth is friendship groups are a laboratory for growing in love; and in that process a laboratory of the brokenness of humanity. When personalities come into contact...there will be conflict. it is a great environment to work on the areas of our life that god wants to heal. let's learn to talk about what is bothering us in a constructive manner. this will sometimes be uncomfortable, but necessary. sometimes the group will need to have a conversation together, and sometimes some of the personalities will need to take a conversation offline just between them. a posture of openness and vulnerability can unlock some powerful doors to health.

### **Chronic Problem People**

Keep your heart pure toward them--use the power of forgiveness to be clean before god. one of the greatest hindrances to healing with difficult people is the resentment they have because of the rejection of leaders. if they are mentally impaired be very loving, but at the same time you will need to be firm. don't be afraid to set strong boundaries. the group will need to be very accepting and loving of the person, but not allow the person to just 'dump' on the group or dominate it.

it will be important for you as a leader to learn how to relate to problem people with a manner that communicates “ i am for you and want to help” all the while being firm about what is acceptable in the group and what is not. You and the group need to pray for the Lord to speak and give insight in how to cooperate with Him on what He is doing in the person's life. set a time for the group to have an extended time of ministry for the person for 'saturation' prayer. at the same time do not let any one person be the focus of discussion and ministry time. let time with the group and healthy dynamics within the group impact the person over time. if it gets overwhelming for the group, pull your Zp into the process. do not let it profoundly negatively impact the group!

### **Feeling of resentment toward Leadership**

two kinds....when someone in your group carries bitterness toward leadership and the second is when you as a leader carry bitterness. the scriptures teach that a bitter spirit defiles others. if you find the friendship group discussion heading into a complaint party, head it off and try to redirect it the group can talk about areas within the fellowship that need improvement without getting lost in complaints. if you see it in individuals within the group you will need to take them aside and share your perspective and challenge them in love. if it is you walking in bitterness, it will be important to talk with your Zp and set up a process to talk it through and get on the other side of the bitterness.