

# LEADING A SMALL GROUP

In a small group young people are given the space to grow in a more intimate setting. Small groups have the potential to create lasting connections with other people in an atmosphere where honesty and vulnerability is encouraged.

## PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

While small groups should be able to function in any setting (many Christians around the world are forced to meet in caves, attics or forests because of persecution), make the most of what you have available to create an environment that is conducive to your aims. Ask yourself – what do you have to work with? Location, seating, lighting, heating, and equipment such as a CD player, television or laptop, can all combine to create an atmosphere.

## SPIRITUAL & EMOTIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Each group needs boundaries. Set these boundaries as a group from day one. The group needs to agree on these boundaries. Here are some things to consider:

- Commitment to participation
- Encouraging each other – speech, action and attitude
- A commitment to attend the small group as a priority with notice given as early as possible if a person is unable to attend at any point
- No mocking, discouraging remarks, destructive criticism
- Confidentiality, as a general rule what is shared in the group stays in the group unless permission is given. Do tell them, though, that anything involving crime, domestic violence, suicide etc cannot be kept confidential – there are legal and ethical issues that you should be aware of.

## FORMAT

Ask yourself, what is the purpose of the small group? For example, if it is to build a greater sense of fellowship and unity in a youth group then you might want it to be more conversational with ample time to pray for each other, and have regular shared dinners etc. If you aim to develop disciples then you might concentrate on biblical teaching. You could even have an evangelistic focus, where the aim is to have non believers gather in a small group setting to find out more.

The purpose of the group may change as time goes on so evaluate it at regular intervals. Alternatively, rather than having a single main purpose for the group you may have several goals for your small group.

## LEADERSHIP

The style of leadership will depend on your personality and gifting. Other factors should also be taken into account, for example, the age of the members, the 'spiritual level' of the participants, and the culture of the small group. With a mature group you may be able to take a laid back approach and give the group space to make it their own. With a younger group you will probably need to take a stronger lead. A good small group leader works hard to build a relationship with each member. In a discussion ask both very general, open-ended questions as well as more specific questions to cover the different personalities in the group. Don't let the extroverts dominate the discussions but try to draw introverts into the dialogue by asking if anyone who hasn't spoken has anything they'd like to contribute.

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