

## ***Healthy Group Dynamics***

- I. ***How to Engage A Small Group***: Simple steps from how and where to greet, to how to set up a home or room, are vital in engaging those coming to your group for building fellowship and relationship.
  - Group leader, co-leader or host home leader should stand by the door at the start of the semester to welcome folks.
    - As the semester rolls on and comfort sets in, a warm-hearted volunteer could stand by the door to welcome.
  - The Dream Team room is a wonderful example of how to have folks engage with one another before the start of small group meeting. This could be the kitchen/dining room in someone's home. It helps foster relationships.
  - It is always good, when possible, to set chairs up in a circle. Try to avoid having the leader on a pedestal or rows of chairs facing the leader.
  - Once the meeting begins, a good icebreaker question can help facilitate people talking and feeling comfortable with one another.
  
- II. ***Communication Skills***: How you communicate to your small group is as important as what you communicate.
  - Body language and eye contact are very important when leading. Show interest and be open.
  - Generate participation and discussion. Resist the urge to teach. Ask open-ended questions that can't be answered with "yes" or "no" (e.g., "What do you think about that?" rather than "Do you agree?")
  - When a question does arise, ask the group for their input instead of answering it yourself right off the bat. Be comfortable with silence. If you ask a question and no one responds, rephrase the question and wait for a response. Remember, your primary role is to create an environment where people feel comfortable to be themselves and participate, not to provide the answers to all of their questions.

- Stick to the lesson but be sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit.
- A great part of communication is listening. Be a good listener. “Most people listen with the intent to respond, not with the intent to understand.”

III. ***Conflict Resolutions:*** Although you may have a small group that is thriving, issues that disrupt the fellowship of the group must be dealt with immediately.

- Needy or draining people must be confronted, with the co-leader, outside the small group setting. Do not allow them to consume the group time or control the conversation. Beware of murmuring, complaining or defiant spirits.
- Confidentiality must never be breeched or compromised.
- Ask the group to pray for each other from week to week, especially about key issues that arise during your group time. This is how you begin to build authentic community and encourage spiritual growth within the group.

#### ***IV. Keys To A Dynamic Small Group***

- **Relationships** – Meaningful, encouraging relationships are the foundation of a dynamic small group. Teaching, discussion, worship and prayer are important elements of a group meeting, but the depth of each element is often dependent upon the depth of the relationships between members.
- **Availability** – Building a sense of community within your group requires members to prioritize their relationships with one another. This means being available to listen, care for one another and meet each other’s needs.
- **Mutual Respect** – Mutual respect is shown when members value others’ opinions (even when they disagree) and are careful to never

belittle or embarrass others in the group (including their spouses, who may or may not be present).

- **Openness** – A healthy small group environment encourages sincerity and transparency. Members treat each other with grace in areas of weakness, allowing each other room to grow.
- **Confidentiality** – To develop authenticity and a sense of safety within the group, each member must be able to trust that things discussed within the group will not be shared outside the group.
- **Shared Responsibility** – Group members will share the responsibility of group meetings by using their God-given abilities to serve at each gathering. Some may greet, some may host, some may teach, etc. Ideally, each should be available to care for one another as needed.
- **Sensitivity** – Dynamic small groups are born when the leader consistently seeks and is responsive to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, following His leading throughout the meeting as opposed to sticking to the “agenda.” This is especially important during the discussion and ministry time.
- **Fun!** – Dynamic small groups take the time to have fun! Create an atmosphere for fun, and be willing to laugh at yourselves every now and then!