

## GETTING TO KNOW YOU [GROUP IDEAS]

Start the group off by doing an activity together that will help break the ice. Having dinner together is always an easy way to start. Begin by telling your stories. You don't have to get to everyone the first week. You may want to ask two or three people to share about their lives. As the leader, you can set the tone and an example by sharing first.

- Have group members bring a few photos from their childhood and introduce us to their family members.
- Sit together at church.
- Ride together to special church events like conferences or retreats.
- Room together at events involving hotel stays. Arrange for the group to eat meals together at these events.
- Establish ways the group can be together outside of a meeting, like a supper (or dessert) club.
- Couples: Have group members bring photos of their weddings and tell the story of their courtship and engagement.
- Thanksgiving Dinner: Prepare a Thanksgiving dinner and then play a game after dinner.
- Semi-formal Dinner: The guys make an elegant dinner for the ladies. Then they honor each woman individually with each receiving flowers.
- Take a retreat together (or just as men or just as women) to seek God together.
- Spend an evening playing board games together.
- Community group CookOuts: Have cookouts at different homes or parks. Play group games or just hang out and fellowship.
- Christmas Party: Exchange "white elephant" (i.e. silly or old) gifts, play games, sing carols, and worship.
- Go camping together.
- Go out for breakfast as a group, or as men or as women.
- Plan times to have the group together when their children are able to participate in the activities.
- Take a group photo and make sure everyone has a copy for their refrigerator.

## PRAYER IDEAS

Community group leaders should avoid praying the same way week after week. Keep your prayer times fresh by varying your practice of prayer by choosing from the following list of ideas:

- Pray throughout the community group time as a need surfaces.
- Popcorn prayers. The community group leader can open with a short single-thought prayer and others who want to pray can just "pop" in at an available pause.
- Members are encouraged to pray several times before the community group leader closes in prayer.
- Review prayer requests from previous weeks by referring your community group prayer journal and members can share updates.
- Set a "theme" to guide the prayer request time: "Let's limit our prayer requests tonight to \_\_\_\_\_ (as an application to the main theme of the night)."
- Have each person write prayer requests on a 3x5 card. Then exchange with someone else in the group or give all the cards to you.
- Laying hands by placing one's hand on someone while interceding in prayer – one on one, one on many, many on one.
- Pray for different requests. Members can volunteer before the prayer time to pray for a specific request or spontaneously pray during the prayer time.
- Encourage members to pray for the person on their left as you go around the circle clockwise.
- Divide members into pairs to pray for each other.
- Each member praying audibly at the same time.

## PRAYER IDEAS

- Everyone who wants to pray takes a turn. Not everyone needs to pray.
- Split the group in half and pray together in a smaller group.
- Encourage members to pray in a variety of postures ... standing, kneeling, holding hands, palms up, walking, etc.

### What Can I Do to Facilitate Meaningful Prayer in my Group?

#### *Model It*

1. Be a person of prayer yourself — pray for your members and for who might fill the open chair, asking God to give you His direction in leading the group.
2. When you do pray out loud in the group, keep your prayers honest, authentic, and from your heart.
3. Basic guide for group prayer:
  - Short prayers create safety
  - Simple prayers are direct and honest
  - Spirit-led prayers rely on God's power
  - Silent prayers are okay for anyone, especially newcomers

#### *Keep it Safe*

1. Don't call on someone to pray unless you've asked permission beforehand (or you know them well).
2. Don't expect everyone to pray every time.
3. Try to avoid praying in a circle. Allow members to pray one at a time as they feel led.
4. Respect the intimacy level. As the group grows in deepening relationships, a sense of safety will foster more genuine prayer.
5. Be clear on who will close the prayer time.

#### *Guide the Prayer*

1. Give general guidelines, but let the Holy Spirit lead.
2. Avoid lengthy discussions on prayer.
3. Include prayer each time you meet.
4. Use a variety of praying methods.

### What Happens When Groups Commit to Pray for One Another?

- Your relationships with Christ and each other will deepen. You will experience spiritual growth.
- There is less chance of burnout as you put problems in God's hands and trust members to His care.
- You allow the Holy Spirit to work in your group so your time together is filling and refreshing.
- He will answer your prayers in amazing ways, and your faith will increase.