

# Basic Guidelines

## FOR LEADING A GROUP

**90 MINUTES** We want to honor everyone's time—including yours! So marathon groups *should not* be the norm. Spend some time hanging out, easing into group. Then spend about 40-50 minutes on the study and let accountability flow from there. Sound good?

**SHARE THE LOAD** You aren't the only leader in your group. So don't take on every ounce of responsibility. Alternate who is taking the lead on a given week. Or maybe divide responsibilities—one of you taking the reins for discussion, the other leading the charge on community and hospitality (bringing food, hanging out, etc.).

**KEY CARE** You're a committed, faithful Christian who is leading others into discipleship. And we're so grateful for that. You *aren't* a trained counselor or psychiatrist. And you don't need to be. That's what key care is for. It's a resource to connect students with the help they need in key moments of vulnerability. If you have a student struggling with anything like these issues below, email [keycare@ukcsf.org](mailto:keycare@ukcsf.org) and they'll help you and your student with the necessary next-steps:

- depression
- severe anxiety
- suicidal thoughts
- death in the family
- abuse (of any kind)
- pornography addiction

**GROWING YOUR GROUP** We love to welcome new people in! Your students' neighbors or classmates. Maybe the barista from your favorite coffee shop. Whoever. Invite them to join!

First, have new folks come to group once or twice to get a feel for it. Then, when they're ready to commit, get your new friend officially plugged into your group and add them to your groupme. We're pumped to have them!

**KEY COMMUNICATION** Your group is awesome. But it isn't meant to be an island (or some guy in space floating alone). Your group is a key piece in the larger community and mission of CSF.

So one of your primary roles as a Group leader is to communicate key CSF items to your students—from special synergies to gatherings and retreats. We know this can feel like “extra work,” but this is how you root the 90 minutes of discipleship taking place once a week in the larger community life and mission of CSF.

## USING YOUR **Curriculum**

**PREPARING FOR GROUP** One of the biggest mistakes group leaders make is over-preparing things to say—great teaching points or insights into the scripture—and under-prepare on how to guide discussion.

The great Gene Parr once said, **“When I’m not prepared, I teach. When I am, I ask questions.”** With that in mind, here’s a quick guide on how to really prepare to lead a group (as opposed to gearing up to deliver a mini-sermon).

**PRAY** - Pray for the guys or gals in your group. Pray for guidance and wisdom in navigating the curriculum. Pray for energy to engage your group and courage to challenge them. Gene Parr also once said, “If you aren’t praying for the people that you’re leading, then you shouldn’t be leading.”

**READ** - Go over the curriculum that you are leading from. Maybe even twice. Commit to really engaging the content. Write questions in the margins. Don’t focus on coming up with smart things to share. Read with an awareness of what questions the Scripture is asking of you.

**REFLECT** - Look back over the week’s content. Write out questions that will help your students connect with the ideas in the curriculum. Think, “How does (the trinity) become real for my guys/gals? Why does this matter to my students exactly where they’re at right now?”

**RELAX** - You can’t make your group fruitful. That’s not your job. Your group will engage when they value one another and enjoy spending time together in conversation. And your group will grow when the Spirit uses little moments to change hearts. So go into group confidently and prayerfully—not stressed. That sucks the fun out of a group!

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## LEADING A

# Group Discussion

This is a big source of anxiety for lots of folks. You're probably thinking "I've never led a group before!" or "I'm not a spiritual guru!" No worries. Just relax and take heed of a few tips for leading a group:

You're a leader, not just a teacher. This is key to remember (while you prep, during group, always). You aren't expected to have all the answers or give a sermon. Your role is to lead your group into discussion and guide the conversation. You may be thinking, "How do I do that?!" Well...

**Ask questions.** Questions are the steering wheel for your group. Whether your group ends up digging deep into Scripture or off on some rabbit-trail is largely the result of the questions you ask (or don't). If your group is getting off topic or stuck, ask a question. Again, this is why thinking about questions is a key part of prepping for your group!

**Don't fear the silence!** Don't feel pressured to speak up and answer your own question if folks aren't talking. If you're answering all your own questions, then you're not leading — you're teaching. Give people space to think. Let them feel some (healthy) pressure to speak up.

**Laugh together.** Begin group just goofing off, catching up, and being friends. It'll help people settle in (and make new people feel welcome).

**Don't ruin the mood.** After folks get comfortable, don't kill the momentum with a hard transition from fun conversation to Bible study. Transitions that send the message "now it's time for the serious stuff" close people off, because they're not sure they can contribute to the serious stuff. A light-hearted prayer is a great way to transition without being stiff or too formal — less "Holy Father, we gather here as unworthy sinners" and more "Lord, we're grateful to be here, be here with us."

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## A CULTURE OF

# Accountability

**Accountability isn't just the last 30 minutes of group.** It's not just giving a recap of your week or a laundry list of your sins, either. So what is it? **Accountability is helping each other integrate the life and character of Christ into our daily life.** It's aligning whatever God is teaching us — through the conversations in group or in quiet moments of prayer — with the life Christ is calling us into.

**ACCOUNTABILITY AND CURRICULUM** In general, accountability should just be a natural part of good curriculum conversation. You don't *need* a set-aside accountability time in order to challenge students to grow. Scripture naturally convicts and challenges us to change our lives. As we find the points of personal challenge and encouragement in each week's conversation, that's where accountability happens. Part of your role as a group leader is to find ways to make the curriculum discussion personal and challenging. This can happen in lots of different ways, so a structured "accountability time" isn't mandatory. If the majority of your group wants to have weekly set-aside group time for accountability — great. Go for it. If the group dynamic lends itself to having no "in-group" accountability, then challenge yourself and others to meet outside of the specified group time. We trust you to make that call.

**WHEN YOU HAVE A "FORMAL ACCOUNTABILITY TIME"** It's ok to talk about sin, but the group needs to balance those conversations with conversation that is focused on the things God is doing in students' lives as well. Like, "What's God teaching you currently?" and "Where have you seen God this week?" These help form positive discussion about growth in spiritual life. Maybe look up John Wesley's accountability questions and use some of those questions in your group as well. They're helpful in directing group conversation.

**Accountability is more than sin management.** Growth requires removing the old self (what God is *calling you out of*), but also requires putting on the new self (what God is *calling you into*). Our formal accountability times tend to focus on what we're not supposed to do, but growing in holiness is actually about focusing on both - what the Spirit is calling each of us to leave behind *and* walk into.

**The attitude of accountability is "firm on the exterior, gentle on the interior".** Challenge your group members to take more responsibility for setting good boundaries while also encouraging them that their struggle doesn't define who they are and doesn't change God's love for them.

**Don't allow the group to talk for hours on end.** It should be a rare occasion when a person talks for longer than 10 minutes. And don't dominate the accountability session as the group leader. There are times when your insight is needed, but you should also invite others to give feedback. Listen deeply. And remember, you can always meet with your group members one-on-one.

THE ART OF

# Hanging Out

## IN GROUP

***“The amount of laughter in the first 30 mins. of group determines the amount of participation in the next 60 mins.”***

- Gene Parr

Taking a few minutes at the beginning of each group to talk and laugh might feel like a waste of time at first but it helps to create a very important group atmosphere. Your group shouldn't feel like a business meeting. Business meetings have set agenda items that help strangers accomplish meeting goals. Core Groups aren't just driven by agenda items. Because you're *family*, not co-workers.

Make sure each group has space where students can have family time. Talk about each other's lives—catch up, laugh a little. Allow your group to grow from business to family.

### **4 tips to starting fun conversation:**

- Ask an ice-breaker question
- Talk about the latest campus news
- Play a quick game to start the Core Group
- Avoid questions about school work and how hard/ boring class is

**Hang Out Weeks** Each group is encouraged to have three “hang out” weeks a semester. We do this for the same reason we encourage laughter in the first half hour of each group. Having fun together helps to create a community of trust and joy. Here are some ideas for having a great hang-out week:

- have a cookout
- 4 square
- pick-up basketball
- board games
- movie-night at CSF
- coffee at your house
- watch the Cats play
- potluck dinners
- laser tag
- hike at the Gorge
- have a bonfire
- play Bingo
- The Breakout Games
- racquetball at the JC
- craft nights
- go out to dinner

## **Do whatever folks enjoy doing—just with your group!**

The only bad hang out idea is doing something that requires no group interaction (like intensely watching a movie). So find something your group would be interested in doing, and go do that! These are also great nights for your students to invite their friends.

Still, don't rely only on group time and "hang out" weeks for group bonding! Informal time together is key! Invite group members over to hang. Ask them to grab coffee. Bring them to church with you. Assign random members to get meals together. Heck, plan a retreat weekend for your group! The sky's the limit for hanging with your group.

Great groups have natural community formed outside of the weekly group time. That's the goal. You'll create community, and when you offer that community up to God, he can (and will!) use it to change hearts and minds.

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## **That's All, Folks!**

Have a very merry group year.