

Small Group Guidelines

It is vitally important to the health of a small group that the small group leader lays a foundation by setting some guidelines for group time. Having some guidelines set up will give the people in the group some boundaries to operate within and also help in creating an environment that is safe for transparency, vulnerability, sharing and growing closer in relationship with each other and with God.

SAFE ENVIRONMENT: This needs to be a place where people feel comfortable opening up and sharing with one another. Below are some ground rules/guidelines that will help create a safe environment:

CONFIDENTIALITY: What is said in the group stays in the group.

LISTEN: Let's value one another during the discussions by really listening to what is being shared. Try to avoid thinking about how you are going to respond, or what you are going to say next.

PAUSE: Allow a pause in conversation after someone shares. Give the person sharing the chance to finish and the group the opportunity to consider what was just shared before responding.

SILENCE: It is important to allow silence in the group as it provides an opportunity for someone to share and for members in the group to process the topic or question being considered.

NO "CROSS TALK": Be considerate of others as they are sharing. No side conversations.

NO FIXING: We are not here to fix each other. Jesus does that part. Give encouragement; speak truth, point to Jesus. Don't try to solve or fix each other.

NO RESCUING: When people are sharing something deeply personal, there can be a tendency to try to make them feel better about themselves or the situation by providing immediate condolences. This will often cause them to stop sharing. Resist the temptation to rescue people.

SHARING: Be sensitive about the amount of time you share.

BE SELF-AWARE: Be self-aware of how you are personally effecting the environment through your words, actions, and non-verbal communication.

"I" STATEMENTS: It's easy to talk about the issues of others, but for our purposes, we want you to put yourself on the table. Try to use "I" statements rather than "them", "the church", "us", "we", etc.

CONFLICT: We will commit to resolve conflict biblically. When conflict or sin issues between group members arise, we want to make sure that we are honoring God and each other in the way we deal with these issues. The following are a few key Scriptures in this regard (*there are many others*).

- If someone sins against you: *Mat 18:15-20*
- Restoring someone in sin: *Gal 6:1-5*
- Forgive a sinner: *Col 3:12-13*
- Reconciling differences: *Mat 5:23-24, Mat 7:1-5*