

Community Group Leader Basics

How We Support Community Group Leaders

Community Group leaders are responsible for fostering healthy, Christ-centered community for their groups; it is an important, crucial role! Our job is to help you succeed and stay healthy as a leader - here are some of the ways we plan to support you:

- All Community Group leaders will participate in Basic Training before they start leading.
- Everyone is paired with a coach. Your coach is here to encourage you, pray for you, and help you talk through sticky situations. If things come up, your coach is ready to come alongside you!
- You will get emails from our Community Groups team that will include important announcements and links to discussion questions and other helpful resources.
- [Resources & Tools](#): Here you will find tools to help people dig deeper
- [Community Group Resource page](#): This page contains articles, on-demand training videos, curriculum resources, etc. There are all sorts of resources for you to dig into at your own pace!
- We recommend that new groups start with discussing the sermon as their weekly content, but if you are looking for other group studies to go through with your group you can browse the available studies in [Study Gateway](#) - if you want access to any of the video curriculums, email Maddie so she can give you access.
- We will offer ongoing leadership development opportunities - these will look different each season, but we try to focus on topics that we feel will be broadly applicable to most leaders.

How to Prepare for Your Community Group

While you can't prepare for every question or conversation that will come up in your group, there are definitely some things you can do to prepare for your group!

Logistics:

- Email your group a day or two before the meeting with a reminder. You could include the link to the discussion guide so they can read over the questions ahead of time and anything else they need to know (i.e. upcoming potluck details, a game the group will be playing, a Zoom link if you meet online, etc.)

Pray:

- Set aside some time to pray for your group each week in advance of meeting.

Discussion Prep:

- While you can't prepare for every question or conversation that may come up, it's helpful to look over the discussion guide and pick out a few questions and think about where the group may go with them.

Suggested Group Meeting Flow/Structure

Every group is different, and you can adjust how your group meets based on the needs of the group, but here is a suggested group structure/flow:

- Before people arrive:
 - Create a warm and welcoming atmosphere
 - Turn some background music on
 - Turn off phones

- Prepare seating + snacks/drinks
 - Be prepared to greet people
- Connection time (15-20 minutes)
 - Chat, catch up with one another, eat a snack, etc.
- Content discussion (45-50 minutes)
- Wrap up and prayer (15-20 minutes)

The First 2 Weeks

The goal of the first 2 weeks of group is to get to know one another and begin building trust. While it may be tempting to dive right into the content, try to focus on getting to know one another, listening to each other's stories, hear each other's perspectives, etc. The first two weeks don't have to be completely content free, but it's important to invest most of that time into building trust.

There are many ways to do this – here are a couple of suggestions:

- One great way to facilitate this "getting to know you" section is by doing what we call 3, 3,3. People take turns sharing 3 people, 3 places, and 3 events that have impacted their lives.
- Each week, ask one person or couple to be in the "hot seat" where they share their life story for 15 minutes (you can also allow other group members to ask questions, if everyone is comfortable with that!)

While it's great to spend time getting to know one another up front, it's important to continue to build community along the way. Some examples of this include:

- Sharing your highs and lows from the week.
- Using [virtual story cards](#).
- Try the [Questions in a Box](#) app.
- Reach out in between meetings. Find a way to stay connected: email, GroupMe, etc. If someone is missing, reach out and let them know you missed them, see how they are doing.
- Show & Tell – ask everyone to bring a meaningful item to Community Group and share why it's important to them (some examples: their baby book, a childhood toy, graduation cap, etc.)
- Take time each week for everyone to share a piece of their story via some specific questions and topics, such as:
 - If you could travel anywhere in the world, where would you go and why?
 - Do you have a hobby or passion project that you look forward to during your time off?
 - Share your experience with Blackhawk (attending, volunteering, past group experience, etc.)
 - Tell us about someone in your life who has made a lasting impression on you
 - If you had a weekend free of all obligations, how would you spend it?
 - Describe a moment from your spiritual journey that was formative for you.
 - What's one skill you've always wanted to learn?
 - Share a memory from your past that is meaningful to you.

How to Set Healthy Expectations Within Your Community Group

Our hope is that Community Groups will be a place where members can come together in community, grow spiritually, and serve together. While each group is unique, it is good to set expectations with your group members so help ensure everyone is on the same page.

Below are some sample expectations: these are simply meant to be a starting point – we encourage you to talk through some basic expectations with your group and add to these based on your group dynamics.

- **Show up.** We are each an important part of the group, and our presence matters! We will commit to showing up consistently.
- **Join in.** Some people are verbal processors, while others are internal processors. We want the group to be a place where everyone has the opportunity to share. If there is some silence, we won't feel the need to jump in and fill it, especially if we've already had the opportunity to share. Likewise, if we haven't said much, we'll make an effort to speak up and share.
- **Be real.** We will come as we are and be ourselves – we want to be real with one another.
- **Listen well and keep things confidential.** When others are sharing, we will commit to listening deeply and giving other group members our full attention. Also, what's shared in the group, stays in the group. Confidentiality is important because it helps people to feel safe in sharing and asking questions.
- **Assume the best of one another and keep short accounts.** We are all learning together, and we each have different areas where we can grow. When we don't understand or agree, let's assume the best about the other person and ask clarifying questions. If something is said in the group that feels hurtful, we each commit to following up with the person in private after the group. We can take some time to process if needed but will address the situation sooner rather than later so as not to allow resentments or misunderstandings to build.
- **Pray for and support one another.** We will also support one another where we can
- **Respect each other's time.** We will respect each other's time by arriving for and ending our meetings on time.

When your group is starting out, we'd encourage you to talk through some of the following questions so the group can discuss their personal expectations of the group and come to a consensus about what all group members can reasonably expect.

- What are their hopes for the group?
- Are you willing to be authentic and contribute to discussion? What will help you feel safe opening up during Community Group?
- Can you commit to showing up for Community Group consistently? Why would this be important for the group?
- What does it look like to expect the best of one another and not assume hurtful intent?