

NOT YET

GROUP LEADER GUIDE

Thank you! As the leader of a CT Group, you have responded to the call to help others find community and grow in their faith. Few other opportunities in our spiritual family surpass the contribution you will be making. As you prepare to lead your group, here are a few thoughts to keep in mind.

Remember you are not alone. God knows everything about you, and he knew you would answer the call to lead a group. Even though you may not feel ready, this is common for all good leaders. God promises, "I will never leave you; I will never abandon you" (Hebrews 13:5). You **will** be blessed as you serve in this capacity.

TOP 10 IDEAS FOR GROUP LEADERS:

1. ***Don't try to do it alone.*** Pray right now for God to help you build a healthy team. If you can enlist a co-host to help you facilitate the group, it could enrich your experience. This is your chance to involve as many people as you can in building a healthy group. All you have to do is ask people to help. You'll be surprised at the response.
2. ***Be friendly and be yourself.*** God wants to use your unique gifts and passions. Be sure to greet people as they arrive with a smile...this can set the mood for the gathering. Remember, they are taking as big a step to show up at your group. Don't try to do things exactly like other group leaders; do them in a way that fits you. Admit when you don't have an answer and apologize when you make a mistake. Your group will love you for it.
3. ***Prepare for your weekly group session ahead of time.*** Preview the session and write down your responses to each question.
4. ***Pray for your group members by name.*** Before your group arrives, take a few moments to pray for each member by name. Ask God to use your time together each week to touch the heart of each person in your group. Expect God to lead you to whoever he wants you to encourage in a special way. When you listen, He will surely lead.

5. ***When you ask a question, be patient.*** Someone will eventually respond. Sometimes people need a moment or two of silence to think about the question. If silence doesn't bother you, it won't bother anyone else. After someone responds, affirm the response with a simple "thanks" or "great answer". Then ask, "How about somebody else?" or "Would someone else who hasn't shared like to add anything?". Be sensitive to new people or reluctant members who aren't ready to say, pray or do anything. As you give them a safe setting, they will open up over time. If someone in your group sits silently through every session, consider talking to them privately and encourage them to participate. Let them know how important they are to you—that they are loved and appreciated. Remember, still water often runs deep.
6. ***Provide transitions between questions.*** Ask if anyone would like to read Bible passages. Don't call on anyone, but ask for a volunteer, and then be patient until someone begins. Be sure to thank the person who reads aloud.
7. ***If you have a large group, breaking into smaller groups occasionally can be helpful.*** With a greater opportunity to talk in a small circle, people will connect more with the study, apply more quickly what they're learning, and ultimately get more out of their experience. If your group has more than 15 people, a small circle also encourages a quiet person to participate and tends to minimize the effects of a more vocal or dominant member.
8. ***Small circles are also helpful during closing prayer time.*** People who are unaccustomed to praying aloud will feel more comfortable trying it with just two or three others. Also, prayer requests won't take as much time, so circles will have more time to actually pray. The other great aspect of small circles is that it fosters leadership development. As you ask people in the group to facilitate discussion or to lead a prayer circle, it gives them a small leadership step that can build confidence.
9. ***Rotate facilitators when needed.*** If you need to be absent from your group for any reason, it will help others grow in their faith and gifts when given the opportunity to host the group. Don't be afraid to ask for help.
10. ***One final challenge.*** Before your first opportunity to lead, read each of the following passages below. Read each one as a devotional exercise to help prepare you to facilitate your group.

PHILIPPIANS 2:1-4 NCV

“Does your life in Christ give you strength? Does his love comfort you? Do we share together in the spirit? Do you have mercy and kindness? If so, make me very happy by having the same thoughts, sharing the same love, and having one mind and purpose. When you do things, do not let selfishness or pride be your guide. Instead, be humble and give more honor to others than to yourselves. Do not be interested only in your own life, but be interested in the lives of others.”

HEBREWS 10:23-25 NIV

“Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”

I THESSALONIANS 2:7-8, 11-12 NCV

“But we were very gentle with you, like a mother caring for her little children. Because we loved you, we were happy to share not only God’s Good News with you, but even our own lives. You had become so dear to us...¹¹ You know that we treated each of you as a father treats his own children. We encouraged you, we urged you, and we insisted that you live good lives for God, who calls you to his glorious kingdom.”

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

How long will this group meet?

This study is 5 sessions long. In your final session, you will be able to discuss continuing with your group for another study. Email groups@crosstimberschurch.org to find out what resources would be the best fit for your group.

What if someone asks a question I don’t know the answer to or needs care beyond what I can provide?

That will happen! Here is your response. “I appreciate that question(s) and I don’t know the answer to that, but I will do my best to find out this week and get back with you at our next Small Group meeting.” Follow up with personal research; call your Groups Coordinator to get advice. You may not have the answers at that time, but you do have other resources available to help. If someone requires more care than you can provide, our Healing Place is an excellent resource. Direct small group members to the website at crosstimberschurch.org/healing-place/. They can contact the Healing Place directly at 940-240-0029.

What if one individual wants to dominate our Small Group discussion time?

R.O.E.! Establish Rules Of Engagement. When starting your Group, or when a new member joins your group, give clear discussion guidelines. Here are two that will be helpful:

1. What is said in Group stays in Group(Confidentiality). Whether it is a prayer request or a discussion statement.
2. In open group discussion, please be mindful of how long you share so all can participate.

(If you feel a person dominates the discussion time then you, as the facilitator can react to the situation positively. Find a place in the conversation as soon as possible and say, “I appreciate your thoughts on this topic, I would like to go to another thought concerning...” then engage others in the conversation.)

Where do we find new group members?

Finding new members can be a challenge for groups, especially for new groups with just a few people. We encourage you to sit and brainstorm a list of people from your workplace, church, school, neighborhood, or family. In addition, people will be directed to your group through our Groups Finder page at crosstimberschurch.org. Please be sure all of your contact info and group info(meeting time/location) are current on that page.