

Relationship Builders for Small Groups

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Introductions

Introduce Yourself Variations:

- As your mother would introduce you to the group.
- As your childhood babysitter would introduce you.
- As your best friend would introduce you.

- State your full name and the places you have lived. How did you get your middle name?

Information Gathering

Have people pair up and discover as much information as they can about each other in three minutes (full name, where they are from, major/job, favorite class or aspect of job, hobbies/interests, family facts). Then, the pairs introduce each other to the rest of group using all the information they learned.

Nuts & Bolts

Have nuts and bolts of different sizes making sure they match. Give each person a nut or bolt. The participants then have to find who has their match. Once they have found their match, they tell each other about themselves. Then, join the group and introduce each other with the information they've discovered.

Demographics

The group decides among themselves what information they would like to find out about the members of the group (major, job, classes, hobbies, interests, birth place, etc.). Each member introduces herself according to the demographics chosen by the group.

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Name Games

Name Action

The leader says his first name and then does an action that begins with the letter of his first name. The next person repeats the leader's name, does his action, and then add his own. The third repeats the first, then the second, and adds his own. Repeat around the group.

Name Game with Ball

Participants sit or stand in circle and one person has a ball. He throws it to another while saying that person's name.

Sears Catalog

Each person in the group chooses an item that might be found in a department store catalog. The item should describe something about the person: job, hobby, major, favorite food, sport, etc. The second person repeats the first one's name and object and adds his own name and object. The third person repeats the first, the second, and adds his own name and object. Repeat around the group.

<p>Variation: Choose an item that starts with the same letter as their first name and describes something about the person.</p>

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History Telling Activities

Two Truths and a Lie

Each person tells three facts about himself, but one is not true. The group guesses which statement is the lie. After everyone has participated, ask questions of each person to find out the whole story behind one of the facts.

Have You Ever...

Have one less chair than people in a circle. The person in the middle says something he has done. Everyone who has also done that activity must run across the room and try to get a different seat while the middle person tries to find a seat. The one left out becomes the middle person and the game continues.

Bag Game – Make a Statement

Fill a brown paper bag with the following items: \$20 bill, keys, shoe, piece of jewelry, Bible, and candy bar. One at a time each person in the group pulls an item from the bag and makes an honest statement about it that reveals something about him. For example, if I pulled a \$20 bill from the bag, I might say, "If I had \$20, I'd buy ice cream for everybody." Statements can be profound or simple. The first to start then passes the object to the right and that person makes a statement until everyone has said a statement about it. Then, pull the second item from the bag and continue. (From: *Talking the Walk* by Dave Bartlett & Bill Muir. Zondervan, 2000, p.61.)

Bag Game – How are You Different?

Fill a bag with cotton balls, stapler, scissors, paper cup, eyeglasses, paper clip, pencil with eraser, and wadded paper. One at a time each person grabs an object from the bag and names one way they are different from the item. Don't use obvious differences like "This is metal, and I'm not." Encourage creativity and self-revelation. For example, "Unlike this pencil, I don't have the equipment to make my mistakes go away. When I botch something, the

evidence is usually right out in the open for everyone to see. I can't just go over it a few times and make it disappear. I have to live with the mistakes I make." Start with a group member and continue on until everyone has had a chance to speak. (From: *Talking the Walk* by Dave Bartlett & Bill Muir. Zondervan, 2000, p.66.)

Inside and Out

Hand out three magazines and a blank sheet of typing paper folded in half to each group member. Have several rolls of Scotch tape available. Tell the members something like this, "This is a two-part exercise. First, go through these magazines and find three to five pictures, phrases, or words that describe your outward life, the image you present to people, the way others see you. You can ask yourself this question, 'If someone followed me around for a week, what would they see?' Next, find three to five pictures, words, or phrases that describe your inner life, the thoughts and feelings you keep to yourself, the person you are in your heart. Think of some things that, good or bad, very few people know about you." Give them enough time to finish the project. One at a time, have everyone briefly explain their choices about the outside. Then, repeat and have them share the inside. (From: *Talking the Walk* by Dave Bartlett & Bill Muir. Zondervan, 2000, p.66-67.)

I've Never

Each person starts the game with five points, keeping score on one hand. Each person in turn says something they have never done. Everyone who HAS done the activity loses one point and folds down one finger. The person with the last point remaining wins.

Key Chain

Everyone gets out their key ring and, one at a time, tells the significance of everything hanging on it.

M&Ms

Pass around a bag of M&Ms and let everyone take as many as they would like. Don't tell them anything else. Make sure they don't eat them yet. Then, have them tell one piece of information about themselves for every M&M they took. You can specify the topics based on the M&M color. (yellow = family, red = high school story, green = a place they've traveled, etc.)

Web Game

Have one person hold a ball of yarn in one hand and the yarn end in the other hand. As he throws the yarn ball to someone else, he says something positive about the recipient. The recipient holds onto the yarn and throws the ball to someone else saying something positive about him and the game continues. The yarn ball can be thrown multiple times to each person, each one holding onto the yarn as he throws the ball.

Variation #1: When someone catches the yarn ball, he tells something about himself before he throws it to someone else.

<p>Variation #2: When someone catches the yarn ball, he tells a little known fact about himself before he throws it to someone else. </p>

Balloon Game

Have each person put one piece of information about himself in a balloon. Then, have each blow up his balloon and throw it in the middle of the circle of people. One by one, pop the balloons and guess to whom that piece of information belongs.

Pictionary Stories

Hand out one Pictionary card to each person and have her tell stories about her life using three of the words on the card.

Group Recall

Participants are asked to consider whom they would choose to be if they had to be another person who has lived or is living (a real person). After they have chosen someone, the participants are next asked to reflect upon why they selected this person. When all are ready to share, the facilitator explains the process: A volunteer goes first, telling the person she would like to be and why. The next person sitting to the left first recalls what the volunteer shared and then shares her selection, etc., going around the circle.

Favorite Cards

Give each person an index card. Have them divide the index card into four sections. In one section, they draw a picture of their favorite TV show, in another section their favorite state, in the third section their favorite book or magazine, and last, their favorite food. Everyone walk around the room showing each other their cards. The object is to try to guess what the other people drew on their card. Do not tell each other whether their guesses are right or wrong; just listen. After everyone has guessed at each others' card, go around the circle and tell what your favorites are.

Dyads

Divide the group into groups of two, preferably with the person they know least. Send each dyad off by themselves where they won't be bothered by other dyads. For ten minutes have them share personal and important things with each other in order to know each other better. Take turns "interviewing" each other to gain some knowledge and understanding of their partner. After ten minutes, come back to the group and have each person tell what she learned about her partner. For a guide you may want to prepare a list of basic questions the dyads can use as a starting point.

Toilet Paper Game

Get a roll of toilet paper. Without giving any other information, pass around the roll and tell each person in the group to take as much toilet paper as they need. Then, one at a time, group members tell one thing about themselves for each piece of toilet paper they took.

Collage

Each person is given a magazine, tape, scissors, and a piece of paper. They are to create a collage that describes themselves using pictures or individual words that they find. Then, explain the collage to the group.

Picture This

Give these instructions: Paint a word picture to describe with as many details as you can how you feel about your life right now. For example, if you were to describe your life as a boat, be specific. You might be a cruise ship or a tugboat, on a calm lake or raging river rapids depending on how you feel things are going in your life. The more details you add to your picture, the easier it will be for the group to understand how you're doing. You might add where you see Jesus in your word picture. (From: *Talking the Walk* by Dave Bartlett & Bill Muir. Zondervan, 2000, p.63.)

Listening Check

At the beginning of the group meeting, warn the members that, at the end, there will be a listening check for what they learned about each other during the meeting. At the end of the meeting, choose one person from the group to focus on at a time. The rest of the members take turns recalling information they learned about the person during the meeting. Ideally, everyone in the group should contribute at least one thing. After most of the group has spoken, move the focus to another person. Continue until everyone has had her turn in the spotlight. (From: *Talking the Walk* by Dave Bartlett & Bill Muir. Zondervan, 2000, p.12-13.)

Family Table

Give these instructions: Draw a picture of your family table. Place yourself at the head of the table. Arrange the rest of your family around the table with the ones you feel closest to sitting closest to you and the ones you are less close to sitting farther away. Then, explain the picture to the group to the level you feel comfortable.

Play "Actionary"

Like Charades, one person acts out a word or phrase that pertains to his life. For instance, he could act out "born in Pennsylvania" or "studying math" or whatever else he would like to tell. For more guidance, provide categories: favorite book, movie, food, place; hobby, interest, travel goal, etc.

Guessing Game

Everyone writes on a slip of paper three things about themselves that no one in the group knows. Gather the papers and mix them up. One person reads one at a time and the group tries to guess who it is.

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History Telling Questions

The more openness, honesty, and vulnerability the leader shows the group in responding to the questions, the more likely the group members will be to share their true feelings. Emphasize the importance of listening and discovering new things about each other. The leader must model good listening skills and insist that the members follow his example: focus intently on each speaker, maintain consistent eye contact, and respond appropriately. (From: *Talking the Walk* by Dave Bartlett & Bill Muir. Zondervan, 2000.)

Beginning Level of Relationship Building

Describe the best time you had this summer.

If you had one wish for your small group, what would it be? What steps are you willing to take to make it come true?

If you could describe yourself in terms of a flavor what would you be?

What was the best gift you ever received as a child?

When are you the happiest?

What do you love to do?

Who is Jesus Christ to you?

What's one talent or skill that you possess?

Describe your bedroom.

If you could be any part of a building what part would you choose to be? Why?

Are you most like a sandy shore, a rocky coast, a thick forest, or a snow-capped mountain? Why?

In three words, describe your life before you were a Christian. In three words, describe your life after you became a Christian. (Use only if everyone in the group is a Christian.)

Where would you like to be five years from now? What would you be doing? What job would you have?

If you were given \$100,000 to spend in one week, what would you do with it?

What do you like to do with your free time?

If you could visit with anyone (except Jesus) from history, who would it be

and why?

If you could spend a month with anyone alive today, who would it be and why?

If you knew you could not fail, what are two things that you would like to do or accomplish in the next ten years?

If you could live any place in the world, where would it be? What attracts you to that place?

Describe an answer to prayer.

What are two good qualities your parents instilled in you?

Tell us about the most daring and adventurous thing you've ever done.

What is the best book you've ever read besides the Bible? What did you enjoy about it?

What is your happiest memory?

What's under your bed?

What has God been teaching you recently?

On what food are you most likely to lose restraint?

If you could go anywhere and do anything for a month, where would you go and what would you do?

Name two people (except Jesus, parents) who have influenced your life and tell how they impacted you.

What almost kept you from coming to this meeting?

If you had a fire at your house and all the people were safe and you had time

to save five things important to you (with weight being no problem), what five things would you save in order of their importance to you?

From your purse or wallet, show four different things – 1) something valuable, 2) something worthless, 3) something memorable, 4) something revealing.

From your childhood, name four of your favorite things – game, hero, music, school subject. Make one of them wrong and see if the others can guess which one it is.

If you were to describe your life in terms of a weather report, what would you say?

What specific thing do you want God to do in your life or for you? Pray for each other about it.

If you were told you have only one week to live and you were healthy, how would you spend it?

Describe the perfect husband or wife.

What is the best advice you ever received?

Tell about one of the happiest days of your life.

If someone would give you anything in the world for your birthday, what would you like it to be?

What do you like to do in your spare time?

Describe the best teacher you ever had.

Describe the worst teacher you ever had.

Tell a little known fact about yourself.

How can we pray for you this week?

Tell why you chose the particular name for your e-mail address.

If you could describe yourself in terms of a flavor what would you be? Why?

What were some of the rules in your home growing up?

Tell us about your favorite movie. What is your favorite part?

Name and describe one of your personal heroes.

Where have you traveled? Tell about one of your experiences.

What is a hobby you enjoy?

In Jr. High, where did you live and what is one thing that you remember about that time?

What is one thing you are looking forward to that you know will happen in the near future?

Finish the sentence: The reason I'm here right now is ...

Finish the sentence: One fear I had in coming here was ...

Finish the sentence: One thing I'm excited (happy) about in my life right now is ...

Finish the sentence: The most powerful person I know is ...

("Finish the sentences" above from: *Talking the Walk* by Dave Bartlett & Bill Muir. Zondervan, 2000.)

Finish the sentence: Words can't describe how I felt when...

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Middle Level of Relationship Building

Choose some object or animal from nature that best represents your experience with other Christians.

Which of the following three body parts best describes how you serve others: an ear (listening), a tongue (talking), or a hand (helping)?

Describe an important decision you've made in the last year.

Describe ways in which you see yourself changing.

Describe or name some things you worry about.

What are four of your most valuable possessions? What makes them valuable to you?

Who has had the most significant influence on your life? Describe how his/her influence affected you.

With which person in your life can you be most honest and why?

Describe two major turning points in your life.

Tell your spiritual journey. (See Member in the Spotlight for more about telling your spiritual journey.)

How do you feel about your relationship with God at the present time?

How does being in fellowship with other Christians impact your life? What experiences with Christian fellowship have you had?

What are two qualities do you like about yourself and why?

What is one thing in your Christian life that you would like to improve this year?

Pretend you're driving in a car listening to your favorite music and all of a sudden the radio turns static. God breaks in on the airwaves to talk to you. What do you think he'd want to say to you?

If you could be a missionary, what country would you go to and why?

If you were comfortable speaking in public, what message would you most want to communicate to your church or college group? Why?

What words, images, or metaphors about God are most meaningful to you? Which images or pictures do you find difficult or barriers for you? How do these images affect your prayer life?

If you could ask Jesus any question and knew he would answer it fully and clearly, what would it be?

When did God become more than a word to you?

You have crashed in the mountains with no hope of rescue. You have a pen and paper to write a letter that will be found and delivered. To whom would you write and what would you say?

Tell about a high point in your life.

If you described your present spiritual life on a scale of one to ten with one being deeply depressed and ten being rapture, where would you place yourself?

What would you like to be remembered for after you die?

What advice would you give a man or a woman about to get married?

Who provided the most human warmth to you growing up?

In one sentence (or word), what is life all about?

Tell a frightening moment from your childhood.

Describe a happy family.

If you wrote a book, what would the title be?

What epitaph would you like for others to put on your tombstone?

How would you define love? Who has shown you that kind of love?

What do you think makes a happy marriage?

How would you define courage?

What would you like the courage to do?

What legacy would you like to leave to the human race when you die?

If you could instantly change one habit in your life what would it be?

Describe a moment when you felt loved by God.

What advice would you pass on to someone who asked?

Name something you've learned about yourself recently. How did you come to learn it?

What is one of the most important or meaningful things to you about being a Christian?

What is the meaning of prayer in your life? When is it easy to pray and when is it hardest? In what way do you want to grow in your prayer life?

What is one thing which has helped your prayer life and one thing which has hindered your prayer life?

Finish the sentence: One thing about me you probably don't know is ...

Finish the sentence: One area of my life in which I'm proud of myself is ...

Finish the sentence: One thing I don't understand about the opposite sex is ...

Finish the sentence: Ways in which I see myself changing are ...

Finish the sentence: I am more of a talker (or listener) because ...

Finish the sentence: I get people's attention by ...

Finish the sentence: I get into trouble when I ...

Finish the sentence: I'm afraid to ...

Finish the sentence: One observation I've made about our group is ...

("Finish the sentences" above from: *Talking the Walk* by Dave Bartlett & Bill Muir. Zondervan, 2000.)

Finish the sentence: A whole new world opened up to me when...

Finish the sentence: Home should be a place that...

Finish the sentence: The most stressful area of my life right now is ...

Finish the sentence: One habit I'm working on changing is ...

Finish the sentence: One area of my life in which I feel really strong right now is ...

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Deeper Level of Relationship Building

What has been a difficult experience in your life? In detail, describe how God worked through that experience.

If you could call on this group to commission you to one task that lies ahead, what would it be? Pray for each other.

What do you do when you're sad? How could someone best comfort you?

What spiritual disciplines do you practice? What are the strengths and weaknesses in your personal use of spiritual disciplines? Where would you like to grow in this area? What can help you? What hinders you?

If you could go back and change any year of your life, which would it be and what would you do differently?

What do you see as the purpose of your life at this time? Do you feel that you are, to some degree, accomplishing this purpose? Why or why not?

What does it mean to you to be true to yourself? In what situations are you tempted to compromise yourself?

What does it mean to you to be free? Do you feel that you are free? Why or why not?

What are the things that you find have most meaning for you in life?

Tell about a disappointment you had as a child.

Do you ever feel lonely? When? What do you do?

What feelings do you have the most trouble expressing?

What things make your life complicated?

What is one lifetime dream still yet to come true?

What do you dislike about yourself the most?

Tell about a time when your feelings were hurt. How did you process it?

Tell about a big let-down in your life. How did you process it?

If someone were to ask you what's important in your life, what would you say?

If that same person were to take a look at the way you live, do you think he'd be able to spot those things you consider important?

Who understands you the best? How can you tell?

Was there a situation in the recent past in which you were instrumental in the growth of another person? If so, in what way were you instrumental?

What's one of your biggest fears? Pray for each other that God will them overcome it.

Finish the sentence: The most frightening experience I ever had was...

Finish the sentence: One thing I missed during my childhood was...

Finish the sentence: If I could live my life over again...

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Friendship Questions

Describe an important friendship in your life right now.

Describe the characteristics about your friends that you enjoy.

Who is your best friend? Why? What qualities do you admire about him/her?

What do you like to do with your friends?

What things would you change if you could about your relationship(s) with your friends(s)?

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Family Questions

Beginning Level

Describe some important traditions in your family.

What sorts of things does your family like to do together?

What do you like best about your parents and your family?

Middle Level

Who are you closest to in your family? Why?

What are your parents like; how do you feel about them?

What would you change about your family if you could change one thing?

Your family may have some expectations for you and your life. What are some of them?

Deeper Level

What are your parents like; how do you feel about them?

What are some characteristics that your father has that you desire in your own life? Do you reject for yourself?

What are some characteristics that your mother has that you desire in your own life? Do you reject for yourself?

What causes the most arguments, conflicts, problems, etc. in your family?

What are you concerned about right now when you think of home?

How are you feeling about going home?

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Tell About Your Past Week (or Event)

Pipe Cleaner Art

Give everyone a pipe cleaner and have them shape it into what their last week has been like. Every person then tells about what they made and how it describes their week.

Cereal Description

Bring three or four different kinds of cereal that could be useful in describing one's week. Pass the cereal boxes around and have each person take a handful of the cereal that best describes his past week. Then, have each tell why he chose the type of cereal to describe his week. For example: Lucky Charms – I felt like things went well for me this week because... ; Fruit Loops – I felt like I was going in loops, up and down, all week because... .

Fruit or Vegetable

Have each person choose a fruit or vegetable with an adjective that would describe her life this week – dried fig, ripe cantaloupe, smashed banana, etc.

...

Highs and Lows

Each person in turn describes one high point (good or happy time) and one low point (difficult, sad, or frustrating time) of his past week.

Adjectives

What three adjectives describe your past week?

How do you feel?

Give three words to describe how you feel right now.

Have you experienced stress or tension this week? What caused it? Pray for each other.

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Member in the Spotlight

During part of each small group meeting, feature one member until all have been featured (six members = six weeks). The featured member's goal is to invite the rest of the group into the meaningful, interesting, unique experiences and aspects of his/her life. He/She can tell whatever he/she wants about him/herself. He/she can bring as many examples as appropriate (art pieces, collections) or actually take the group to a special place or do a favorite hobby/interest together if all can participate. The group should show genuine interest as they would want given to them when it's their turn.

Some options include:

Spiritual journey or testimony

Artistic expressions

Travel stories and souvenirs

Tell about special family members

Life milestones

Achievements

Sports

Hobbies, interests, collections, talents

Favorite food or treat brought to eat together

Take the group to a favorite or meaningful place

Poems or pictures

Spiritual Journey

During one small group session, each person draws their spiritual journey as a graph or a road map.

Show some high places and low spots in the journey.

Show places where God revealed something about Himself that made a difference.

Show where he felt especially close to God and some places where he felt distant.

He may share it with the group, if he wants, when he is the Member in the Spotlight. Or, he may share it with the leader sometime.

Magazines

Using magazines provided, cut out pictures (words, too) that describe the following six areas and paste them on a paper:

- A picture which describes you
- Your favorite (outdoor) activity
- A color which describes your personality
- A picture which describes what makes you feel most alive (grants a sense of significance/meaning)
- A picture which describes your favorite time of day
- A picture you like

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Affirmations

Life can be brutal so take time to encourage each other. Affirm the things that are commendable, likeable, praiseworthy, or strengths. Tell what you see God doing in each other's lives, where they have grown and changed, and the gifts God is developing in them. Tell each other how they have made a difference in your life and in the group.

How:

Have everyone in turn affirm one person. Then, focus on the next person until everyone has affirmed each group member.

Variations:

Share strengths you see in each member using the fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23.

Think of one gift you'd like to give each person in the group (i.e. peace, a new car...). Tell them and pray for them.

Describe each person in the group using three positive words.

Tape a thick piece of paper (cardstock) on each person's back and give each one a felt tip pen. Write an affirmation on each other's papers and sign it.

Optional discussion questions before giving affirmations

How hard is it for you to give sincere compliments? Why?

How do you want people to respond when you compliment them?

How do you normally respond when someone compliments you? Why?

Which is more difficult for you: giving compliments or receiving them? Why?

Do you suppose God enjoys being complimented as much as we do? What

compliments do you want to give God?

Optional discussion questions after giving affirmations

What did you think was the hardest part of this meeting?

Which compliment surprised you the most or meant the most to you?

(Questions from: *Talking the Walk* by Dave Bartlett & Bill Muir. Zondervan, 2000.)

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Asking Questions Games

Ball Of Paper

Make a giant ball of newspaper by wrapping newspaper around a core but in between each layer place a piece of candy with a written question wrapped around it. When it comes time for icebreakers, pass around this already made ball of paper and have each person take a layer off. They have to answer the question and then they can eat the candy.

Balloon Questions

Pass one balloon around the circle with a felt pen. Each person writes a question on the balloon. The question can be about what they'd like to know about the other group members. Or, it can be something they wish someone would ask them. Then, pass the balloon around the circle and each person chooses three of the questions on the balloon to answer.

Spin the Bottle

One person draws a question out of a bag of questions and spins the bottle. Then, they ask the question to the person to whom the bottle points. The questions can be about the Scripture passage or a subject of the leader's

choice.

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Trust Building Games

You earn trust by being there when someone needs you. All participants must be willing to earn each other's trust by being there for each other in these exercises. If not, the experience will be damaging.

Electric Fence

Set up an obstacle to represent a fence using rope or twine about waist high. Instruct the group that they have just escaped from prison and must get over the "electric fence" without getting shocked. It is the responsibility of the group to get all members of their group over the obstacle. They may not go under.

Trust Circle

Eight people stand in a close circle. One person stands in the center of the circle and crosses his arms over his chest with hands on opposite shoulders. Keeping his body stiff, not bending at the waist, he leans toward the circle and is passed from one person to another.

Group Sit

Eight or more people stand in circle with hands on the waist of person in front of them, elbows at 90-degree angle. At the signal, everyone sits on knees of the person behind them all at the same time.

Back to Back

Partners lock arms back to back and try to stand up. Try it in fours.

Human Knot

Have a small group form a circle. Every member of the circle grabs a hand of two different people who are not next to them. Once everyone's hands are intertwined, the group tries to get into one big circle without letting go of the persons whose hands they originally grabbed.

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Large Group and/or Co-ed Games

Rank Order

Divide into teams of 8-10. Have each team rank itself in order according to a topic (for example: age, birth date, height, etc). All teams rank according to the same topic. The team to finish first wins.

Wizards, Giants, Elves

A variation of rock, paper, scissors, the game needs plenty of running room. The playing area is a large rectangular shape with a centerline and "home" lines at either end. Divide the group into two teams and announce a time limit for the game (45 minutes). Each team chooses a "home" side, goes into a huddle there, and decides whether to be Elves, Wizards, or Giants for the first round. Throughout the game, each team's goal is to stay on the home side. Then, the two teams face each other at the centerline, each team standing in a line shoulder to shoulder. At a signal, each team acts out their choice: Elves bend over with their hands on their knees, Wizards stretch their arms out in front as if casting a spell, and Giants stand tall with their arms above their heads. The losing team turns and runs back to its own home line before the winning team members tag them. All who are tagged before they cross their home line must join the other team. Elves chase Wizards, Wizards chase Giants, and Giants chase Elves. Now, the teams (with their new members or less members) huddle and decide their choice for the next round. Play continues until time is up. The side with the most people at the end of the time wins.

Ha-Ha Game

Everyone lies down on their backs and places their head on the stomach of the person in front of them. The first person says "Ha" and each person adds a "Ha" until the last person. Try to make it to the end without laughing.

Magazine Movie

Divide group into teams and give each team a magazine picture. The teams have ten minutes to come up with a movie based on the picture and perform it for all.

Animal Noise

Write the name of an animal on 2-3 slips of paper. Write the name of a different animal on 2-3 more slips of paper. Continue until there is a paper for each group member. Distribute the papers so that no one reads it except the recipient. Have the group spread out. Everyone must keep their eyes closed, make their animal noise, and use the sound to locate the other people who are the same animal.

Human Trivial Pursuit

Divide the group into two teams with people who know each other well on the same team. Give everybody six small papers and a pen. On each paper, they write a fact about themselves having to do with the corresponding trivial pursuit category: Geography, History, Entertainment, Art & Literature, Science & Nature, Sports & Leisure. (For example: Geography – "I once tried to dig a hole to China in my backyard.") Each team collects its papers and mixes them up well. One team reads one or its papers aloud and the other team together tries to figure out who the fact is about. Teams alternate turns and get a point for every right answer.

On Thu, Feb 11, 2010 at 10:08 PM, Jeff

Alexander <indianachialpha@gmail.com> wrote:

How to Lead a Small Group Meeting

www.toolsformentoring.com

The 90% Rule

90% of successfully leading a small group is prayer and love. If you pray regularly for the people in your group and you love them by spending time together and listening to them, you will be a great small group leader. The other 10% you can get from this website and your ministry's resources.

How Do I Start a Small Group?

Pray.

I meant it! Don't skip this point! "God, please give me the people you want to bring together in my small group. Bring me the ones you want me to help get closer to you." Then, be friendly and accepting of everyone – some will be easy to connect with and others won't. You'll learn from both. Assume God answered your prayer no matter who ends up in your group.

Consider a purpose statement.

The overall purpose of a small group is to build meaningful friendships and learn more about a relationship with God. Pray and consider how your small group will pursue those two general goals. The general goals are like ice cream; your small group is a flavor. For example:

Jack's purpose statement is to learn to live as men of integrity through studying the book of James. Ellen's is to study the character of God and trust him more.

Your group members will all be in different places regarding a relationship with God. Some may have not yet considered having one.

Invite.

Introduce yourself and some other people you've invited. Keep inviting. "Hi, I'm Mike. (Some get-to-know-you conversation here...) I'm leading a small group Bible study Wednesday evenings and it'd be great if you could join us. Come out to ice cream tonight and meet some of the others."

Gather at least four or more.

Then, have your first meeting. Before, build friendships with people you are gathering for your group. Hang out with them at the main meeting, social gatherings (pick them up or tell them to meet you there), or get together one-on-one. After a week or two, when four or more commit to meet as a group, have your first meeting. Keep inviting more to join.

What Do I Do the First Meeting?

Plan beforehand.

Choose from the Relationship Builders. Plan the short Bible study (See Build Your Own Bible Study and Free Bible Studies) with questions that get people to talk. Minimize leader talk. See How to Lead a Discussion. See Components of a Small Group.

Smile.

Be enthusiastic. (Hide your nervousness.) Greet each person warmly when he enters the room. Introduce him to the others. "Hey, John! Good to see you! John, this is Andy. Andy's from Seattle. Where did you say you were from? (and so on..)." Do this every week with each member.

Eat.

Food and drinks distract people from the discomfort they may initially feel when they arrive for your first few meetings.

Introduce.

While they eat, do something from Relationship Builders – Introductions or Name Games. Leader leads – you go first.

Get to know each other.

Choose from Relationship Builders – History Telling Activities or History Telling Questions Beginning Level. Leader leads. The more open, honest, and accepting you are in responding to the questions, the more likely the group members will follow suit. Focus intently on each speaker and maintain consistent eye contact. Ask the others to do the same. Say something like, “As each one answers a question, we need to give him our full attention. Then, when it’s your turn, we’ll do the same for you.”

Decide on group values.

Have the group discuss and come to an agreement on the things they value as a group. For example, what’s said in the group, stays in the group; focused attention on the speaker; etc. Write them down.

Do a short Bible study.

For the first study, you could choose Scriptures that have formed your goals for the group.

For example, Julie says, “I’ve prayed all summer for our group. My prayer, and my goal, is that our group will help each other follow Jesus more closely this semester. John 13:34-35 sums it up for me.”

Read the text aloud.

Possible questions:

- Name someone who loved you enough to help you along your spiritual journey. How did he or she influence you?
- Look up “disciple” in the dictionary. Where do you see yourself on the

journey of becoming Jesus' disciple?

- In what area would you like to learn about or develop your relationship with God?

Pray for each other.

Assign prayer partners for the week. Write down something you want your partner to pray about for you this week and exchange requests. Have partners ask about the requests next week.

Begin developing group ownership.

Ask someone to bring treats next week.

As you continue to meet, assign other parts of the small group meeting to members: announcements, prayer journal (keeping track of prayers and answers), history telling questions, Bible study, worship, opening prayer, closing prayer (See Worship Ideas and Prayer Ideas for Small Groups), etc.

Commit to the group for three months

or a semester.

And then members can evaluate whether they want to continue in the group. Assure them they can come a couple times to see if they want to stay in the group. Then, ask that they make the group a priority for three months or a semester.

Close the meeting.

After the meeting, make it a point to individually thank members for coming. Communicate that you were glad they came. Do this after every meeting.

Hang out.

Talk about anything. Eat more. Go to someone's house for a movie. Go out

for ice cream. Go bowling. Tell stories. Help a group member. Be together. Even if everyone can't stay and even if you can't hang out after every meeting.

Some Good Advice

- Your members will take their cues from you. So, it's important for you to be enthusiastic about the possibilities that lie ahead for your group. They're more likely to get excited themselves.
- Greet them individually when they arrive and thank them individually when they leave. Your simple friendliness communicates that you, and God, are glad they were born and are in your life.
- Model however you want the members to act and live and how you want them to treat each other. The Apostle Paul said, *Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me--put it into practice. Philippians 4:9*
- Commit to confidentiality. What's said in the group, stays in the group. If confidentiality is violated, immediately meet privately with the members involved to deal with the situation. Teach people when to keep information to themselves.
- Keep your ears open during your meetings. You may discover things about your members that give you a connecting point later. Even insignificant details may signal important issues in their lives. If you don't trust your memory, jot down some notes after the meeting.
- Guide people to answer from their own personal lives and experience. Ask for specific ways they will apply the Scriptures. You will often ask, "How do you specifically apply that in your own life?" or "How have you experienced that principle, or verse?" or "What does that look like in your own life?"
- Be OK with silence after a question. People often need time to think before

they answer.

- Stay flexible enough to address a member's immediate need during the group time. This shouldn't happen every week. You'll need to decide when an issue is sufficiently critical that you need to deal with it instead of your original plan.
- Don't allow anyone to attack or confront people in the group. Any correction should be done privately.

Evaluate Yourself Regularly

From: *Talking the Walk* by Dave Bartlett & Bill Muir. Zondervan, 2000, pp.12-13.

- Is my group continuing to learn and grow?
- Are we having difficulty being honest with each other?
- Are there some leadership tasks I can delegate to my group members for their greater ownership?
- Have I given members the opportunity to tell their spiritual journey to the group?
- Have I challenged members to adjust wrong thinking or to respond to Christ personally?
- Are we truly enjoying our time together each week?
- Have our meetings fallen into a rut?
- Am I regularly praying for my group members?
- Am I coming to the group as a co-learner or have I slipped into the pattern of being a teacher?

- Am I giving advice rather than actively listening?
- Does each member have the opportunity to meet regularly with a mentor one-on-one?