

SKILL 3: HOW TO CONDUCT YOUR FIRST MEETING

1. Welcome people at the door

2. Offer them refreshments

3. Allow some social interaction

Examples:

“How long have you been coming to Grace?”

“How did you come to Grace?”

“What do you like about Grace?”

“What do you do for a living?”

“Do you have any children?”

“Where are you originally from?”

4. Always begin the meeting with prayer. Sample: “God, thank you for our time together. Thank you for bringing everyone here safely. Be with the ones that were not able to be with us tonight. Keep them safe, watch over them. Would you guide and lead our time. Would you help us to minister to one another and to learn not only from You but also from each other. Begin to develop trust and care among us we pray, amen.”

5. Thank everyone for coming and share vision for group. Sample: “I’d like to thank everyone for coming. Before we get started with our study, I’d like to share with the group what I believe is the vision for us getting together. And then ask us to prayerfully commit to some things concerning our group. There are three reasons why we meet as a group:”

A. To mutually help each other grow in our relationships with God. I sense that all of you have a desire to grow spiritually, otherwise you wouldn’t be here. We can help each other do that.

B. To grow in our relationships with one another. In a church this size, it’s tough getting to know people simply by going to church. In addition, with our hectic, busy and often isolated lives we need a way to make some new friends with similar life stages and pursuits.

C. *To pray and care for one another.* When and not if, we face difficult times in our lives we will need a support system of people who care for us. It truly saddens my heart when I see people go through deaths or loss or other trials alone or without God. I don't know how they do it!

"The Greatest Commandment is to love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul, mind and strength. And the second one is like it, to love your neighbor as yourself. Upon these two commandments all else depends." – Matthew 22:37-40

Did you know that it is impossible to obey and fulfill the Great Commandment as well as nearly every command in the Bible by ourselves? God has designed it that we can only obey and fulfill the Great Commandment and most every other commandment, if we do it TOGETHER!

Look at all these "One Anothers" of the New Testament:

Be at peace with one another (Mark 9:50)

Love one another (John 13:34)

Be devoted to one another (Rom 12:10)

Honor one another (Rom 12:10)

Live in harmony with one another (Rom 12:16)

Stop passing judgment on one another (Rom 14:13)

Accept one another (Rom 15:7)

Instruct one another (Rom 15:14)

Greet one another (Rom 16:16)

Serve one another (Ga 5:13)

Carry one another's burdens (Ga 6:2)

Be patient, bearing with one another in love (Eph 4:2)

Be kind and compassionate to one another (Eph 4:32)

Forgive one another (Eph 4:32)

Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs (Eph 5:9)

Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ (Eph 5:21)

In humility consider others better than yourselves (Phil 2:3)

Teach one another (Col 3:16)

Admonish one another (Col 3:16)

Encourage one another (I Th 4:18)

Build each other up (I Th 5:11)

Spur one another toward love and good deeds (Heb 10:24)

Do not slander one another (James 4:11)

Do not grumble against one another (James 5:16)

Pray for one another (James 5:16)

Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another (I Peter 5:5)

6. Ask for feedback of the vision for the group. In fact, open it up and ask, "Would any of you mind sharing why you decided to try a group? What prompted you to come? What are you hoping to get out of your group experience? No right or wrong answers, it can be for whatever reason. I'm certain many others have similar reasons"

7. Go over the group covenant together. Make sure you stress that these expectations are something they have to truly believe in, expect of themselves and others in the group, hold dear, and own for themselves. It's a promise you are making first to God, then to yourself and finally to the group to do these things. Let's read them together.

As a participant of Grace's Small Group Ministry I commit to the following:

- Give priority to the group meeting and call if I will be absent or late
- Create a safe place where people can be heard and feel loved (no quick answers, snap judgments, or simple fixes)
- Keep anything that is shared strictly confidential and within the group
- Avoid gossip and to immediately resolve any conflict or concerns by following the Biblical principles of Matthew 18:15-17
- Mutually help each other to learn and grow spiritually
- Invite friends who might benefit from this study and warmly welcome newcomers
- Get to know the members of the group and pray for them regularly

Ask each member to take the covenant with them and pray over it, and bring it back signed and dated. If they are unwilling to sign it, deal with them on an individual basis (we require this of all Grace groups, not as a legal thing but as what is minimally necessary for effective groups). Stress that signing the covenant is not legally binding, rather a demonstration of good faith to God, themselves and to each other.

8. Begin the study