**Collected Grow Group Wisdom!**

Tips for facilitating grow groups (from experienced group hosts) Compiled 12/2017 and 1/2018

* Pray! Pray before your group begins to meet. Pray for your group during the season of the group meetings. Invite the Holy Spirit to work in great ways among your group.
* Make personal invitations for people to join your group, or other groups. Personal invitations work best.
* Go through the lesson/curriculum ahead of time so you can help it flow better during the session.
* Have a backup ice breaker or other conversation starter ready should the conversation ever struggle. Sometimes it is helpful to prompt conversation with a "safer" or more fun topic.
* The host should lead by example and take the initiative to “get real” (share deeply from her personal life) first.
* The hosts need to be ready to be transparent and vulnerable to the group. Take the risk and share openly and honestly.
* Share from your own experience, and then stop! Don’t share too much or draw to lots of connections from what you share. Let other people engage and share from their experience.
* Be okay responding, "I don't know." It's good to bring in outside help (people, resources, etc.)
* Don't underestimate the power of a good ice breaker! You might be surprised at the unexpected ways that people will share. You can bond in 25 minutes! But also add a spiritual component.
* Give everyone an opportunity to share and be engaged, but do not force people to share. Honor people’s choice to share at a different time.
* Push the group to engage their hearts, not just their brains. Pursue meaning rather than just overanalyzing the study. It’s okay not to have an answer.
* Reign in those who want to talk too much, take over, or have all the answers. Protect “space” for less eager people to share as comfortable.
* Remember that some people take time to organize their thoughts. Allow some “down time” or silence for the group members to think and process.
* Resist "telling" the answer to questions and let group members discover. Ask questions as opposed to making statements.
* Learn the art of the open-ended question.
* It is okay to get done before the allotted time, or even go over if you give members permission to leave when needed. Don't take it personally if the group isn't chatty that evening.
* Group size and attendance may vary depending on a lot of factors out of your control. Expect some variation. Don't take it personally!
* Be flexible; assume the session won’t go as planned. Be ready to steer the group when it gets off track or time is passing, or intentionally allow the group (and give permission) to spend time talking about something that has become important. This may mean eliminating something else in the session plan!
* Flexibility during the group time is a way for the Holy Spirit to lead in ways you have not anticipated. Don’t overly strong-arm the group dynamic to stick to the session plan.
* You may need to take time to engage something important that comes up during the group discussion, or in your opening time engage something that is very important in the news or community. Keep the group focused, however, and don’t let it wander unintentionally.
* When kids are present, offer ways for them to be engaged and present ideas on their level. Groups may have different ages of children, so this may mean taking the time to talk about the ideas at different levels. Remember that going “simple” may also help many adults!
* Encourage people to take notes on the Sunday messages to help them remember the main ideas later in the week when the group meets.
* Reach out to support members if you are struggling. It’s okay to ask for help!