



Turning Lost Students into Christ-Centered Laborers

LEADING A SMALL GROUP • Ten Suggestions for the First Group Meeting

The first group meeting is a crucial one. People will sometimes decide whether they will return based on this meeting. It's also a unique meeting since sometimes group members are unfamiliar with each other, you, where to meet, etc. Don't be surprised if your first meeting takes a lot of energy and time to get going. It's worth it to make it a success.

Here Are Some Ideas that Will Help You Start Off Well:

1. Visit every potential group member prior to the meeting. If you can't visit everyone, a phone call is more effective than a note. Take the time to be personal on the phone – they need more than just a, “Tomorrow night at 8:00.” When you drop by, establish a more personal relationship by asking about their photos, posters, classes, major, family, or how their week has been. Help them see their need to be in a group by asking what they want out of this Bible study. Lastly, give them the details: Make sure they know when and where – write it out.
2. Take care of all the details regarding the environment – e.g., the room, time, lighting.
3. Be there early to welcome everyone and introduce people to each other. Work like a dog on remembering names.
4. Be enthusiastic, regardless of the turnout. If only one or two people come, you may have to alter your plan and overview some of the material you wanted to cover. Be positive and ask them if they know of anyone else who might be interested. Tell them you are really looking forward to the Bible study.
5. Choose content that will meet needs in the group and can be done in a short time period. Be sure it's non-controversial and easy to teach. You may not want to have a “lesson” the first meeting, preferring to spend time getting to know one another. However, some people might be coming to your group to just check it out, and they expect some time in the Word. If you decide to include content in your first group meeting, discuss some of the biblical principles for growing in faith or for being in a small group.
6. Be careful to plan the actual group time. Give yourself extra time for flexibility so you end on time. You don't want to run long the first group. You might plan your first group something like this:

Sample Schedule for Your First Meeting

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| • Introduce yourself. Be personable and real. | 5 minutes |
| • Pray. You do it. Keep it short. | 1 minute |
| • Have each member introduce themselves. | 5 minutes |
| • Icebreaker. | 20 minutes |
| • Communicate purpose of your group time. | 5 minutes |
| • Content. | 15 minutes |
| • Introduce the material, cover details. | 5 minutes |



7. Don't put people on the spot by asking for their testimony or having them pray when they aren't prepared to do either. Depending on your group, you can also have some strange conversations that aren't appropriate for the group if you ask too much. Ask safer questions at first.
8. Don't blow people away with your big words, grandiose dreams or spirituality. If you start your freshman group with a lecture on how this group is going to reach the world, you might not have a group left.
9. Be real. Share with the group some of your own journey with the Lord – your ups and downs along the way. Put yourself in their shoes. Remember, they probably don't know what to expect, so help them feel at ease.
10. Be positive when asking people to come each week. You might say something like, "You know, one of the things I'm looking forward to about this group is getting to know each other. If seven of us are here one week and four different people the next, we'll never develop a sense of unity, and we'll never get to know each other. I'll be here every week and hopefully everyone will be able to make this time a priority so we can get to know each other."

Follow up with each person later and ask if they think they can attend the group regularly. Give them room to say "no," but encourage them.

After Your First Group Meeting

- Take some time to thank God for your group and the meeting time.
- Try to drop by and see each member at least once before the next meeting to get to know them better and get feedback. You might do something social, but don't force yourself on them. Let them know you care about them as a person.
- For the first couple weeks remind your group about the meeting a day or so before. This can easily be done with a short phone call. After a couple of weeks it will be in their schedule.

For Thought / Discussion

1. Share your first small group experiences. What can you learn, good and bad, from them?
2. Agree or disagree: How people feel during and after the first group meeting is more important than what they learn?
3. What are some specific steps you can take to create a good atmosphere for your group?

End

Cru.Comm is the small group material for Campus Crusade for Christ's Campus Ministry. It was created by Centerfield Productions, the field based division of CruPress. We'd love to hear your feedback on this study. Please write us at centerfield@uscm.org