

Tips for your 1st Group meeting

I. Objectives

3 primary objectives of this first group:

1) Create a fun, warm atmosphere and to connect relationally. By far the most important thing is to connect with the group members and hopefully have them connect with each other. Do NOT go into this thinking your content will blow them away. Go into it trying to create a good atmosphere.

2) Look at something in the Scriptures that might provide motivation or create a vision that would motivate them to opt to continue to be in the Life Group. You want to have Biblical content. If a “serious” freshman checks you out and you never get to the Bible, he or she might conclude that you don’t value it. Even if it’s 15 minutes, get into the Word.

3) To cover some basic administrative issues like when the Life Group will meet, what will be covered, vision for the group.

Timeline suggestion for first Bible study:

Intros/icebreaker 20-30 minutes, depending upon size of your group. The group leaders should probably start, saying something about themselves. Again, make it interesting.

You can pray a short prayer – don’t ask a freshman to do it.

Bible –20-25 minutes.

Administrative details – 5-10 minutes - upcoming events, logistics for the group, email list, creating a group me for the group, etc.

II. Pre-group prep

1. Line up a good place. Avoid highly public places that are prone to interruptions. Some meeting areas that are more public could work if there is limited distractions and could be a good way to invite others to come. Use a space that is easy to find and inviting (not a dark, cold room in your dorm’s basement). Look for a place with reasonable seating for good eye contact and enough space, good temperature and good lighting.

2. Try to meet everyone before the group, even if it’s just a 5 minute conversation.

3. Send E-mail and text reminders. Yes, you want to email and even text people about coming. But don’t rely on these as a relationship builder. Go see them. They will be A LOT more likely to come if they have met you before your first Life Group. If you don’t find them home, you could leave a note and stop by again. Do everything humanly possible to visit them.

III. Ideas on creating a good atmosphere once the group starts

1. Get there early! Set up the food, room, etc. Be there to welcome people. Introduce folks to each other as they arrive. Don't arrive late. This communicates ALL the wrong things.
2. If only one or two people show up, don't say negative things about the others who didn't come. Do not panic. Do not act upset. Give them your best shot, though you might have to adjust your plan. Assure them that there are others interested.
3. If a large number of people show up be ready to manage the discussion and help people meet each other. If you have a co-leader you could break into two groups for some of the discussion.
4. Start and end on time. More on this later. Maybe wait a couple of minutes to start if you know others are coming.
5. Introduce the leaders. Say something warm, interesting about yourselves.
6. Create a welcoming vision for what the group can become. Say something like, "Thanks for coming out. We're really excited about this group – we want it to be a community where people can be honest – can get to know each other – can learn about Christ together through studying the Bible. It doesn't matter what your background is – committed Christian, confused Christian, a seeker who is just curious about becoming a Christian – it doesn't matter; we're glad you're here. We call these things Life Groups – a place where we can be a community of friends – learning together, regardless of where we are along the journey."
6. Have a good ice-breaker/intro planned. Remember people are a tad tired of sharing "name/home/major", but you probably need to hit those. "most unique" is a good idea (something true about you that might not be true of anyone else in the room - not boring stuff like birthday). Also, best/worst of first weeks of school might work. Don't wing this. This might be the most important part of your group! You want something people really get into. Soularium can help you go deeper. Remember it takes a while for a group to jell, so if this goes great, be thankful. If it goes "OK," that's probably most normal.
7. FOOD FOOD FOOD. Have some food there. Cru can reimburse you
8. Have some extra Bibles on hand – We have some in the Cru office. You may find it better if everyone reads from the same version too. That can make discussions easier.

IV. Bible Content – get into the Word

V. Administrative Issues (leave time for these! Prepare them well)

Since this is the first group, you've got to hit several important administrative issues. Leave time for this.

1. Pick a regular time and place to meet. Go into this with one or two suggestions. Don't say, "Let talk about Monday. Tuesday. Wednesday. etc" You can kill a group this way. Maybe ask some of your most interested people before group and then make a couple of proposals. Do this quickly!
2. Give vision and forecast what the small group will be about. Be enthusiastic. Say something like this, "This semester we're going to cover a bunch of great stuff. Our focus will be on Christ and how great he is. Because we are all coming from a variety experiences we are going to cover some foundational things that are crucial for us in understanding what it means to be a Christian and follow Christ for a lifetime. It will center on Christ and trying to apply the Bible to our lives not just gain more head knowledge.
3. Consider making some sort of statement about coming every week. Something like, "You know, I'm really looking forward to this being a great group – where we learn from each other and get to be good friends. If 7 of us are here one week, and 10 the next and 3 the next we won't have a chance to get to come together as a group. I know studies come up – I'm a student, too. But of the 168 hours in the week, I'd like us to consider setting aside this time to meet together. If we have some consistency meeting each week I think our friendships will grow and we'll all get a lot out of this time. So, if you can, let's all try to show up. "
4. Plug the weekly large group meeting and the fall retreat and other upcoming events. You may want to grab dinner together before the next Cru weekly meeting.
5. End it by thanking them for coming. End it by forecasting how great you think the group will be.
6. Give them your name/e-mail/phone in case they have any questions.
7. Ask if they know of others who might want to come.
9. You end it in a SHORT prayer.