

# Getting Started

While there's no formula guaranteeing a successful Community Group, there are a few things you can do to get the group off to a great start.

## PICK A START DATE

Be aware of the best seasons to start a new group. Late-January and late-August are often some of the best times in the year, as people are getting back into set schedules and establishing the routines. Target these natural times to get started.

## IDENTIFY MEETING TIME AND PLACE

It's good if you can have some flexibility in the time and place you meet, but you need to have a target before you can start inviting others to join you.

## GET THE WORD OUT

- *Start by identifying your target demographic and group size. 8—15 is ideal.*
- *The best place to start is with people you already know and have relationship with. Who do you know that is not experiencing community with others? God may have strategically placed you in relationship with them for a reason.*
- *Once someone commits to your group, ask them to consider inviting a friend/acquaintance they know who is not connected in meaningful community.*
- *Attend **Group Connect** or other PV-sponsored connection event. These periodic events (Jan. & Aug. are prime times) are the most effective way to connect with new people seeking community. Connecting with several people at once helps get the infusion of momentum you need to get started.*
- *If your group is still open, contact the Director of Community Groups to be included as a Featured Group. As individuals inquire about Community Groups, Featured Groups are first place they're directed.*

## HAVE THE FIRST MEETING

- *Make the first meeting fun and mostly social.*
- *Take five minutes at the end of the first meeting to tell the group what excites you about where the group is headed.*
- *Make sure everyone knows what day you're meeting, when and where.*
- *Talk to the group about your childcare plan going forward (if applicable).*
- \* **See Appendix E: Creative Childcare Solutions**
- *Ask someone in the group to collect and share everyone's contact info, birthdays, anniversaries, etc.*
- *Reminder: Take a few minutes prior to the arrival of your group members to pray for the evening.*

## THE FIRST MONTH

- Use the provided Starter Study. If you're still actively looking to add members, consider a short, relationally focused study to start with.
- Begin sharing life stories (the 30-minute versions), as a part of the Starter Study.
- Meet one-on-one with at least one group member or couple, outside of your group time. Encourage everyone else in the group to do the same.
- Plan a purely social event outside of your group time. Host a cookout or movie night, attend a local theater together, sports watch party, etc.
- Reminder: Consistently pray for your group members by name.

## THE SECOND MONTH

- Continue the Starter Study and sharing life stories.
- Complete the Community Group Agreement together.  
**\*See Appendix L: Sample Group Agreement and the Starter Study**
- Start talking about your next study.  
**\*See Curriculum Pathway for suggestions.**
- Meet one-on-one with at least one group member or couple, outside of your group time. Encourage everyone else in the group to do the same.
- Reminder: Consistently pray for your group members by name.

## OFFICIALLY CLOSE YOUR GROUP

Once you've arrived at your target size and have completed the Group Agreement, let the group and the Director of Community Groups know that you are now closed, for the next season of your group. By designating your group as closed you are no longer *actively* trying to connect new people into your group. However, in rare situations, it may be appropriate to bring a new person(s) into the group. If that is the case, it needs to be with the full agreement of the group. Contact your Community Director and the Director of Community Groups for help on how best to do this.

## THIRD MONTH

- Begin exploring some opportunities for your group to serve together outside of your group meetings. Think about who in the group you might ask to help plan/coordinate this.  
**\*see Appendix D: Serving Together for guidance**
- Finish sharing life stories (if necessary).
- Ask someone else to lead the discussion at a group meeting.
- Meet one-on-one with at least one group member or couple, outside of your group time. Encourage everyone else in the group to do the same.

## CONNECT WITH YOUR COMMUNITY DIRECTOR

Invite a mentor with wisdom to pour into you on a consistent basis. Our goal is to connect you with a Community Director as soon as possible, ideally within the first six