



GROUPS MATTER.

Getting Started: How to Start A New Group

One of the most important thing a church can do is start new groups. New groups reach new people, develop new leaders, make more disciples, and allow more people to exercise their spiritual gifts, leading to greater spiritual maturity. New groups grow faster and are more evangelistic than existing groups. Churches that regularly start new groups almost always experience consistent growth. Any church, regardless of its size, location, or ethnicity, can start new groups.

But starting new groups is not easy. You have to be intentional in your actions. Starting new groups requires a catalyst—and you are that catalyst! You must have the vision for reaching new people and be willing to do the hard work it takes to make it happen. Here are simple steps to start a new group:

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Pray

Pray for God to lead you to who you need to reach, assimilate, and disciple. Pray for God to call others to help you start a group. Pray for existing groups to support you in the creation of your new group by praying and releasing members to go with you. Ask God to bring awareness to people who are not participating in a group of their need to get involved and for relationships with others.

Identify your target

Decide what will be the makeup of your new group. Young Adults? Single Parents? Students? Young Couples? Etc... What segment of your congregation or community does not “fit” with existing small groups? Is there an age span that is too wide? Who attends worship but does not have a group that is designed for them?

Select resources/Bible studies that the group will use.

Use resources that address both the needs of people you are trying to reach and your abilities as a leader.

Develop a list of people who need to consider the new group.

Develop a list with contact information of potential members for your new group. Contact people who are not currently connected to a group. Personal phone calls are much better than emails or letters.

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Choose a date to start your new group.

New groups can start at any time. Significant times on the calendar or for the church also work, such as the start of the new church year, January 1, or Easter Sunday.

Choose a time and location where the group will meet.

Most groups meet in homes but it may be best for your group to meet at a park or a coffee shop or some other public place.

Train your small group leadership.

Provide training for those who agree to help start the group. Provide expectations as leaders, job specific training, and information on the target group.

Start with a fellowship.

Plan and conduct a fellowship or interest party. Many people interested in a new group are interested in making new friends. Offer a fellowship before the start of the new group and invite as many potential members as possible. Share about the new group and invite participants to attend. Consider asking an existing group to help with the fellowship/interest party and other activities.

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Host the first group meeting.

Make sure everything is ready! Arrive early and verify the room/space is ready to go! Be prepared to teach and lead the best lesson you possibly can! Allow time for fellowship and prayer.

Evaluate, encourage, and celebrate.

Evaluate the process, encourage your group, and celebrate as new people join. Follow up frequently with guests and work to build relationships with people. Lead your group to plan fellowships and ministry projects. Do life together.

Enlist and train additional leaders.

As the group grows enlist and train additional small group leaders, especially an apprentice. Encourage the group to pray to start a new group in the next 6-18 months as most groups cease to grow after 24 months. Train your apprentice to be able to start and lead a new group, or assume leadership of the existing group while you start a new group.

Begin the process again. ■