

NUTS & BOLTS

DEALING WITH CONFLICT IN A SMALL GROUP

“If you are presenting a sacrifice at the altar in the Temple and you suddenly remember that someone has something against you, leave your sacrifices there at the altar. Go and be reconciled to that person. Then come and offer your sacrifices to God.” Matthew 5:23,24(NLT)

“Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other’s faults because of your love. Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace.” Ephesians 4:2,3 (NLT)

THE NUTS AND BOLTS OF DEALING WITH CONFLICT

Why is it hard for me?

- It has never been modeled well for us
- We fear negative consequences
- We may not love the person enough

Types of group conflict:

- Little frustrations
- Relational problems
- Sin issues

Little Frustrations: personality differences, pet peeves, social awkwardness

- If possible, overlook it
 - Proverbs 19:11- “A person’s wisdom makes him slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense.” (NET)
- If you can’t overlook it, address it
- If you overlook it, but it becomes a pattern, address it

Relational Problems: hurt feelings, buried anger, unhealthy relational interaction

- Someone said something offensive
- Someone did something offensive
- Both need to be addressed
 - Ephesians 4:26: “Go ahead and be angry, You do well to be angry– but don’t use your anger as fuel for revenge. And don’t stay angry. Don’t go to bed angry. Don’t give the Devil that kind of foothold in your life.” (Message)

Sin Issues: a pattern of unrepentant behavior contrary to the teaching of Scripture

- Don’t gossip
 - Proverbs 26:20: “Fire goes out without wood, and quarrels disappear when gossip stops.” (NLT)
- Watch your approach
 - Galatians 6:1a: “Dear brothers and sisters, if another believer is overcome by some sin, you who are godly should gently and humbly help that person back onto the right path.” (NLT)
- Be careful you don’t get pulled in
 - Galatians 6:1b: “And be careful not to fall into the same temptation yourself.” (NLT)
- Pray A LOT!

How to address issues in your group: follow the pattern in Matthew 18:5-7:

“If another believer sins against you, go privately and point out the offense. If the other person listens and confesses it, you have won that person back. But if you are unsuccessful, take one or two others with you and go back again, so that everything you say may be confirmed by two or three witnesses. If the person still refuses to listen, take your case to the church.” (NLT)

- Go to the person FIRST: talking to anyone else is gossip
- Bring a couple of people with you; if the first step is done, this step is rarely needed
- Bring it to the church: asking a pastor to talk with someone first is asking them to disobey Scripture



WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

In every group, there will be some conflict among members. This is just a natural part of living in a community. How we deal with this conflict will probably make or break our groups. If we simply ignore it and hope it goes away, it will eventually create a very unhealthy group experience. Many people have correctly observed that conflict is the pathway to intimacy. If we are willing to confront the problems that our groups face, we will experience a closeness in our group that only comes through facing challenges together

NUTS & BOLTS

LEADING A GROUP MEETING

At the meeting before

at this point, it's important to talk to the leader (if applicable) and check the schedule

see details below

7 Days before

planning goes a long way in making your leadership of the meeting successful

see details below

3-5 Days before

it's time to figure out exactly how you are going to lead the group in an authentic discussion

see details below

1 Day before

with preparation complete, it's time to reconnect with the group and put the time in God's hands

see details below

THE NUTS AND BOLTS OF MEETING PREPARATION

At the meeting before...

- Talk with your group leader (if applicable) and verify the topic for the next meeting
- Go over the group meeting and curriculum schedule
- Make sure you have all necessary leader guides/helps
- Discuss any unique aspects of the next meeting (life stories, prayer, meals, etc.)

7 Days before...

- Look at your personal schedule for the week and block out at least 30 minutes to prepare

3-5 days before...

- Be praying that God will use your leadership of the meeting to help people grow spiritually
- Some important things to do or remember...
 - Discussion questions normally need tweaking; look for questions that encourage people to express their opinions and that will generate conversation
 - The goal for the group curriculum time is authentic discussion, not completion of the material
 - You should come up with a "big idea" for the night and bring it with you on a note card
 - You should always come up with a specific way you will help people take a step of application
- If the group is discussing the sermon from the previous week...
 - Send a link (via the River Point Church website) via email to the group so that they can listen to the sermon if they did not attend the service from the week before
 - Download the discussion guide from the River Point Church website
- If the group is using a DVD curriculum...
 - Watch the video portion in full and take notes
- If you are reading a book together...
 - Read the assigned portion, taking notes; highlighting small, important sections to read to the group
- If the group is using a small group curriculum...
 - Read over the chapter for the week and answer all the discussion questions yourself

1 Day before...

- Contact the leader (if applicable) and discuss the flow of the meeting
- Write down a plan for the evening including a time schedule for your plan to follow
- Pray for each member of the group individually, for discussion and application
- Send a reminder to your group including the time, location, and any material they need to bring



WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

In every area of life, things always run more smoothly when we put a little bit of planning into it. With our community groups, we tend to think that our discussion times will go great if we just all show up and begin talking. However, this is rarely the case. Many times the group gets side tracked, no one shares very much, the material seems to lack any relevance to real life; and we walk away feeling like the evening was wasted. If you will take a little bit of time and follow this meeting preparation plan, we believe it will greatly improve your group experience.

NUTS & BOLTS

INCREASING COMMITMENT TO THE GROUP

Where do we start?

How should we approach the problem of people not prioritizing group?

see details below

What are the causes?

Why would a person join a group and then not prioritize them in their life?

see details below

How do I accelerate relationships?

How do we help friendships form faster?

see details below

How do I connect group to progress?

How do I help the group see we are going somewhere?

see details below

THE NUTS AND BOLTS OF INCREASING COMMITMENT

Where do we start?

-”When a leader blames the follower for not following, the leader has ceased to lead.” -Andy Stanley
“Making Vision Stick”

-It’s easy to blame the group members for low commitment

-However, it is completely counterproductive

-To increase commitment, a leader must first assume responsibility for the group

What are the causes of low commitment?

-**Not** spiritual immaturity: *this is a myth; people commit to what they enjoy and what helps them*

-**Not** a broken system: *don’t blame small groups; this is the format of churches throughout history*

-**Not** because they don’t like the people in the group; *you can learn to love almost anyone*

-Already have a lot of relationships: *group just becomes another set of relationships to manage*

-New relationships take time to develop: *people forget what it is like to make new friends*

-No connection between group and spiritual progress: *people must feel like they are not wasting time*

How do I accelerate relationships?

-Take a retreat/ day trip: *you will be surprised at how quickly you can become friends in a short time*

-Assign dinner partners: *this systematizes the members getting together outside of the group time*

-Schedule group socials in between studies: *this systematizes an emphasis on friendship in your group*

-If at all possible, never cancel meetings: *even if only one or two will be there, utilize this pre-planned time*

How do I connect group to spiritual process

-Be organized: *when a leader is organized, it helps members feel like the group is well led*

-Manage prayer time well: *set parameters for prayer requests and actually pray for each other during group*

-Don’t be a democracy: *Get input about decisions, but don’t vote. Make the decisions that are best for the group*

-Limit studies to 6 meetings: *members will begin to tire of anything longer; it also adds a sense of progress*

-Do communion together: *if led well, this will be a spiritually rich time for your group*

-Talk regularly about the Sunday message: *this helps members recognize that the group is there to help them live out what we are hearing on Sundays*

-Share how God is using the group in your life: *members must hear what God is doing through them in you.*



WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

We all want groups that love being together and that prioritize meetings over the other things going on in their lives. However, for many of us, that is not the case. At the slightest stress on their schedule, many of our group members are quick to drop group attendance. Since our goal in Group Life is to see lives changed through community, we must help them move their group attendance to a higher priority in their life. Many leaders blame their members for lack of commitment, but that is not helpful. We must think of more effective ways to lead them.

NUTS & BOLTS

MULTIPLYING A GROUP

The last meeting of the starter period

establishing expectations for the group life cycle

see details below

6 months into the group life cycle

choosing an apprentice is vital for multiplication to work

see details below

6-18 months into the group life cycle

passing on knowledge, skills and opportunities for leadership

see details below

2 months before multiplication

having important conversations about multiplication

see details below

THE NUTS AND BOLTS OF MULTIPLICATION

At the last meeting of the starter period

- Explain the concept of authentic sharing, emphasizing the importance of relational support in spiritual growth
- Explain that when it comes to spiritual growth, we tend to be generic about our weaknesses
- Being specific and focused about our weaknesses helps us make better progress toward Christ-likeness
- Ask everyone to think of one very specific thing that they want God to change about them over the next year

Planning the meeting...

- Think about your group dynamic. What format will best help people share their “one thing” in an open, honest way?
- Some ideas include:
 - couples groups: break up men and women
 - college/single groups: break into smaller groups
 - share your “one thing” at the prior meeting
 - come up with a list of possible areas of weakness/sin that they can think about
 - ask people to email their “one thing” to you before the meeting
 - having someone pray for the person after each person shares
 - have a confidentiality statement in your covenant

Leading the meeting...

- Start by sharing/repeating your “one thing.” Make sure to stretch yourself and share something that is really going on in your life that you don’t share with everyone
- Emphasize the importance of confidentiality, encouragement and support
- Remind them that we are not confessing our sins for the purpose of forgiveness, but for support
- Emphasize reliance on the power of the Holy Spirit to successfully overcome this weakness/sin

After the meeting..

- Plan to make this a regular part of the sharing and prayer time in your group meetings
- Use the same format you decide on for the initial share time
- Celebrate victories, encourage people who’ve failed and challenge each other to continue to rely on Christ for the strength, power, and discipline to overcome it.



WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Multiplication may be the most important aspect of how we do small groups at River Point. First, our groups can be more relationally healthy. When a group meets too long, the group experience becomes stale. Second, it allows us to connect new people at RPCC into healthy, well led groups. There is nothing better for a new person at the church than to be folded into a group with people who already know how to have a successful small group. At last, it is vital in reaching our community for Christ. As God brings new people to us, we must make a place for them