

# Small Group Outside of the Meeting

## Building Relationships

Small Group life needs to spill out of the bounds of your meeting because Small Group is more than just a meeting. It is a group of God's people who meet regularly for nurture and discipleship in the context of a shared vision. Think of your Small Group as a **network of relationships** knit together by love, commitment, and a common task. It is a group of people through whom the power of God is flowing to win the lost, heal the sick, as they build one another up and extend God's Kingdom.

For some groups, relationships naturally spill out of the bounds of the meeting. But usually this requires leadership, *your* leadership. Here are some practical suggestions for leading your people to experience life outside of the meeting itself:

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These events not only build relationships, but can be used as outreach opportunities as Small Group members invite unbelievers.

- Picnics, cookouts, or potlucks
- Box lunch or progressive dinner
- Bowling
- Go swimming
- Play volleyball
- Go to the fair
- Make your own pizza party
- Visit an orchard
- Campouts
- A ski weekend
- A weekend retreat
- Video night
- Go to a movie
- Field trips
- Bake cookies together
- Go to a park or a concert

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Close friendships are built by sharing a common life together. One of the best ways to do this is through service and shared ministry. Here are some ideas:

- Participate in a community service, such as food distribution
- Identify a single parent or widow and give them a weekend vacation
- Have a one-half evening of prayer together
- Together support a special missions project
- Identify a needy family and plan a special way to bless them
- Find a way to serve an unbeliever

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Plan a special night when diads and triads (groups of two or three) can share together. This can be as simple as having popcorn or playing cards. Make assignments and ask them to report about it at the next Small Group Meeting.

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Model relationship building by inviting Small Group members into your home outside of the regularly scheduled Small Group meeting. Be sure to include more than one person or family unit at a time. This provides a model for others and an opportunity to share the vision and involve your intern in doing the same thing.

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Encourage people to share mutual interests. Network persons with similar interests in things such as cooking, shopping, or biking.

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Sit together with Small Group members on Sunday morning. This will encourage your members in the habit of fellowship within the body as a whole.

You're the leader. Lead out in this area. We've found that people appreciate it but often lack initiative. Lots of people are looking for friends and the Small Group is the ideal place to provide them.

## Caring for Your Group

You are the church's first line of pastoral care. Many of the issues and needs in our people's lives can be met by talking and praying with their Small Group Leader. If they present needs which are beyond your ability to help, call your Coach or Small Group Pastor.

Get involved in the lives of your people outside the meeting. Following are a few suggestions:

- Weekly phone calls and discussions--more than surface conversations
- Have coffee with members
- Have them in your home
- Visit them in their homes
- Pray with them

Visit members in the hospital. Hospital visitation can be a very daunting task. Here are a few tips to help make it easier and more productive.

- Go during regular visiting hours
- Be respectful of the doctors' and nurses' duties
- Respect the other patients in the same room
- Make your visit short, 5-10 minutes is best
- Ask them how they are doing and listen
- Don't tell them stories about your illnesses or someone you know who had the same problem they do
- Don't say, "I know how you feel"/You probably don't
- Do say, "I care about you"
- Do ask if you can read Scripture/Choose the passage you will read ahead of time
- Do ask if you can pray for them

Helping those with chronic needs in an appropriate manner is another aspect of caring for your group. Those with chronic needs can drain you of energy you need to minister to others. Ask your Coach or Small Group Pastor for help. Options are to refer them to a Small Ministry Team, a recovery group (like The Healing Journey), or counseling.