

LIFEGROUP

Leader Resources

THE IMPORTANCE OF ICEBREAKERS

People can be funny sometimes. What I mean by that is when people come to a group or visit one they have so many emotions flooding through them. They will be very excited, because they did choose to come on their own, and they feel in themselves that just by driving to the group and walking in they have accomplished something. Others may actually be dreading the decision, which may be due to someone inviting them. They may not feel good enough, like they are bringing so much baggage, or like they will be the “sore thumb” in the group. Another emotion people may have flooding through their body is extreme nerves (a.k.a. butterflies or their stomach turning) and the reasons for this emotion are endless. So, you have some people that are excited and nervous, you have people that are dreadfully shameful and nervous, you have people that are shy and nervous, and/or you have people that are just NERVOUS. The special ingredient that can calm all these feelings is what is known as the ICEbreaker.

The ICEbreaker is a mechanism in conversation that we use to lighten up the mood and can be accomplished in many different ways. I have learned that the best time for one is right before the commencement of a meeting or event. If you want to lighten up the mood, use a funny ICEbreaker. (Note: Funny, meaning something that is clean and humorous, and not offensive to people, races, ethnic groups, etc.) Have everyone state their name, age, something unique about themselves, and then employ the ICEbreaker. You could have them state their favorite superhero or vacation spot, sports hero or television show. The list is endless. I have heard of leaders making each member re-enact a line from a movie. You as the LIFEgroup leader will know what ICEbreaker fits your group. If you need more examples, please feel free to call. Be CREATIVE in your ICEbreakers and it will make people feel more involved and reassured in coming to your group.

TROUBLESHOOTING IDEAS

DIRECTIONAL SPEECH:

Talking can be very powerful, but in excess it can also be very boring and damaging. LIFEgroups are all about opening up and communicating. As LIFEgroup leaders, you must be the mediator and leader of the conversations. This does not mean that you dominate the whole time in your group. Yes, there may be times when most of the communication comes from you, but that does not mean every time. A good leader can direct conversation in such a way that it encourages people to really think and open their hearts. Be an intentional leader. Ask yourself questions like: Why am I talking about this anyway? What examples can I give that will make the topic become real? What do I want the people in my group to walk away with? How do I grab their attention?

Asking questions helps you realize the direction in which you will lead them. Prepare the conversation before it takes place. Get input from godly counsel and people close to you so they can offer you constructive criticism. When you ask a question that you want people to answer in the group, always have an idea

of where you see the conversation going. If you realize the discussion is venturing off-topic, you as the leader must redirect the people back on topic. Try returning to the previous question and asking it again. Starting over helps one recollect their thoughts. With each discussion of which I am a part, I continue to learn more how to lead. **A leader is someone who knows where they are going. If people see that you know where you are going they are more likely to follow. If you follow your Rabbi (Jesus), people will follow theirs (you). Know your destination.**

THE CONVERSATIONAL BULLY:

It never fails that each group always has a “talk-a-lot” person or what I like to call a “conversational bully.” Unfortunately, I used to be one myself. I was the person in the group that always had something to say or had to prove to people I knew more than they did. Even after I came to know Jesus, it would occasionally rear its ugly head. A personality like this can really harm the atmosphere of the group if not dealt with properly. People in the group will think, *Here he/she goes again*, or *When is he/she going to shut up*, or *I never get to speak*. It is even worse when the conversational bully is the leader of the group. The best way to stop a conversational bully is to give others more time to speak.

As LIFEgroup leaders you must give equal opportunity to each one of your members of the group. If you don't deal with the conversational bully, you may lose members, either because they feel less important or because they may never get the chance to open up. Either one is not good. How do you stop the bully or what examples can I give you to help? If you are the leader of the group, the first thing you must do is not dominate the conversation. This will take discipline, but it is possible. Develop conversations that will allow others to be participators versus spectators. Ask questions and encourage others to answer. Let the conversational bully be the last to answer. If this person always lifts their hands first, just say in a polite way, “[Insert Name], let's let others answer first,” or “I know you are passionate about this subject and that is good. Let's see if others have any advice we can learn from,” or even try “When I ask this question, I would like for those who haven't had the chance to say something to be the first to respond.” These are some examples that give both direction and respect to all parties involved. Remember that you do not beat a bully by becoming one yourself. You beat one by giving them time to listen more than they talk. Also, if the bully gets offended and wants to talk to you afterward, listen to what they have to say. You then tell them why you are doing what you are doing: allowing everyone the opportunity to talk, not just one person. You can do it!

PEOPLE=TIME: MICROWAVE VS OVEN

As a leader, it is not beneficial to have the “microwave” mindset. Items such as pizza rolls cook at an exact time in the microwave. That's great, but people are not pizza rolls! Some people require more time and energy than others. If you want to be an effective LIFEgroup leader, you must do more than just your allotted “microwave” time for your lifegroup. True relationships are not set on a timer. Ask a man's wife if their relationship is timed, and she will look at you like you are an idiot. People = Time.

Great leaders are the ones that keep track of their members' lives. That does not mean to be a stalker, but to pay attention. Give people your time, because people are the reason you have your group anyway. If a person approaches you and asks to talk to you about an important issue, do you say, “You have five minutes and your time starts now.”? I hope not! Some people need the same advice repeatedly, and some may need it only once.

As LIFEgroup leaders, I encourage you to have the “oven” mindset. This is the mindset that people take time to prepare, to be moved into position, to be checked on, and even stirred at times. People are like ovens, not microwaves. They take time to grow and learn. They may need to get checked on once in a while. They may make mistakes. They may take more time than others. They may need you to prepare yourself more. They may call for sacrifice. What is more important to you: your material or your members? I am not requesting for you to let people consume your time and life, but for you to give people an extra couple of minutes or chances. A microwave may cook quickly, but an oven cooks thoroughly. Be an OVEN.

WHAT’S UP MEMBERS?!

People live to feel welcomed. Think about it, when you walk in a room full of people or you go to an event, you love when people tell you hi. People long to feel welcomed. I am not just talking about saying hi to everyone that comes your lifegroup, but making them feel like they are part of the lifegroup even if it is their first time. Sometimes as leaders we get use to people in a group and what happens is our group turns in to a clique. However, as Christians we should make anyone feel like they are able to be part of the lifegroup. When people feel the “clique” atmosphere it makes them feel just like the world makes them feel-unwelcomed. The word welcome has to do with acknowledging the person presence in a caring and kind way. When people or visitors feel welcomed it makes them feel like they belong. When you are doing your lifegroup get to know people before you start your group. If a person comes late to the lifegroup make sure you talk with them at the end.

Let me give you some wisdom that I have learned: make sure you talk to ALL NEW PEOPLE after the group. Being personal with people cause people to be personal with you. If people feel like you don’t care about them, they may leave and not come back. The phrase “what’s up?!” speaks a thousands words. Depending on the way you say the phrase can determine on the way you make people feel. No matter if the person is old or new welcome them with a smile and shake their hands and look in their eyes. People have transitioned from having to first believe in order to belong, to wanting to belong before they believe. Every person in your lifegroup must know they are wanted, valuable, needed, and special. You as the lifegroup leader have the opportunity to connect people with God and others. Randy Frazee in his book *The Connecting Church* writes on page 35, “the development of meaningful relationships where every member carries a significant sense of belonging is central to what it means to be the church.” So say what’s up like you mean it. Who knows you may just make someone’s day. People do belong.

SPICE UP YOUR LIFE:

Sometimes in life things get dry and routine. Relationships become distant, things aren’t enjoyable as much, or with just things happening normal things don’t feel the same. This can also be true with your lifegroup. This is especially true for someone who has done their group year after year. How do I get out of this feeling you may be wondering. Spice it up! Did I just say that? Yes I just said that. What I mean by that is you may have to change what you have been doing. Think of it this way, what if you like green beans and you ate them everyday. Eventually you would not enjoy them as much as you use to and over time you will get sick of them. So what do you do? You try something different. Like peas! Yes peas may have the same color and both are vegetables, but both don’t taste the same. You can have the same group yet have a new side to it, and though it looks the same to people it will taste different. Spicing up your lifegroup will be different, but different might be what you need. Get i mpute from your loyal members or your co-leaders. Think outside the box.

By spicing up your lifegroup, you will come to find that it will be fun again to you the leader, because it will feel new even to you. As a lifegroup leader myself, I have Spiced up my lifegroup three times in four years and have changed locations four times. I came to find out that people loved doing things different and they liked the new locations be use it made it feel new to them all over again. Don't be so predictable as a leaders, make your members look forward to the next week or even the next semester. For example, I have had a lifegroup tell that the way they spice up their group is that they would as a group do servant projects for others, do movie nights sporadically, see what was happening in peoples lives, have joke night, let others come in an talk to group, team up with other lifegroups and do things together, cook outs, cancel lesson and just talk, do random acts of kindness to people in the group, and even give financial gift to members that needed it in their group. If your group feels like it is loosing it's flavor, through a little spice to it. Learn to make people want to come back for more. Jesus was never boring.

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