

# Opening Group to New People

## CONNECTING IN COMMUNITY - Small Group Resource

Why is it important for a small group to be open to welcoming new people? Some may think that opening a group to new people is about making our small group network bigger to make our church look good. But these reasons are human focused and miss the mark for Jesus' call:

*Matthew 28:18-20 "Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.'"*

Notice that the call involves both evangelism (meeting and inviting new people) and discipleship. Evangelism in small groups is often dropped or forgotten because it takes intentionality and can be uncomfortable at times.

## *WHY is inviting new people important?*

- It's about influencing more people for the Kingdom of God. The Holy Spirit is on a mission to call and lead people to God, building His church as the community of God. We miss the heart of God when we simply turn inward, creating a nice, comfortable bubble. God is a generous God who has abundant love, hope, peace and joy that He wants to share with others through us.
- It creates more space for people to connect into community. For those who are resistant to accepting more people into their group, remind them that others have created space for them to experience the group they enjoy. Can we give this same courtesy to others?
- It prevents relationships from going stale. It has been our experience that groups who do not grow or change in some way grow stale and fizzle out within a few years.

# *HOW do we invite new people?*

- Start casting the vision to create more space for people to connect. You can do this by:
  - Leading a Six-Question Bible Study of Matthew 28 and discussing the “WHY” reasons above.
  - Dialoguing through people's fear, anxiety and hesitancy to bring in new people.
  - Inviting someone with a passion for evangelism to come and share with the group.
  - Spending time praying together for God to change our hearts and bring to mind people He wants the group to invite.
- Encourage each couple/person to pray and then invite one person/couple from their circles of influence to the group.
- On your way to weekend services, pray that the Holy Spirit connects you with someone He wants in your group. Then, look around the foyer and auditorium for a face that you like. Introduce yourself and see where the conversation leads.

## *Small Group Dialogue*

- How did you first hear about Jesus and the gospel message?
- Who engaged in spiritual conversations with you when you weren't pursuing God?
- What prompted you to become part of a small group?
- How has being a part of a small group shaped your walk with God or your sense of belonging to His mission?
- How do you enjoy meeting new people? When is the last time you met someone new at church or in the community? How did this encounter come about?
- In what ways are you going out of your way to make disciples? How are you engaging others in exploring their journey towards God?

- In what ways are you teaching others? How are you sharing the hope and truth that leads to maturity in the faith?
- Who in your circle of influence could benefit from being in a small group?
- How can we as a small group encourage one another in this--both in attitude and in action?

### **Additional Leader Resources**

- "Open or Closed Groups" Small Group Foundations Section 5, TrainedUp
- "New Group Members" Small Group Foundations Section 5, TrainedUp
- *The Spirit-Filled Small Group* by Joel Comisky

