

4 Ways to Incorporate 'Care' into Small Groups

By Tracey Ware*

#1 Make it Simple

Caring is all about making the 'other' our focus so caring for group members does not need to be complicated. Sometimes it is the little, simple things which can make a huge difference.

Sending a text message or making a phone call just to say hi or to follow-up a prayer request. Organizing to have a catch up during a lunch break with a group member who is struggling. Making an extra meal for someone in the group who may be unwell, or visiting at home with a bunch of flowers from your garden.

Phoning a group member and letting them know that you have just prayed for them. Offering to help with a manual task or a 'one off' project a group member is committed to. Visiting during a hospital stay. Sending a card in the mail. (old-fashioned maybe – but people will be touched that you took the time to show you care!)

Following up on anything shared during your group meeting *in any way at all* shows care!

I am certain you could come up with a long list of other ideas by simply thinking about what makes **you** feel cared for. Why not take some time to 'brainstorm' with your group members and make a 'cared for list' which could be made available for all group members.

#2 Plan to Care

It is important to talk about how important 'care' will be when your group first establishes. What will it look like? What are the group member's expectations?

#3 Create a Role

While general care for group members will happen in 'ad hoc' ways it may be useful to be on the lookout for a group member who exhibits pastoral care gifts. Take them for coffee and talk to them about how you see the potential of their gift being released in the group. Ask them to commit to be the 'carer' for the group. Keep in mind that it is helpful to have a time frame around the role (People are more likely to take on a role if they know that it is not for life!) It is also helpful to be clear about what the role will entail – (I have found it works well to have a simple written role description.)

#4 Be Clear

If you do appoint someone to be the group 'carer' it is important also to be clear with the group about how this will work. Specifically, to let them know that this role **does not** negate the fact that we are all responsible to show care for one another! Outline how the group 'carer' will take on other specific tasks or may even coordinate some of the aspects of care across the group members I mentioned in the first point of this article.

Remember – *Caring is all about making the 'other' our focus* – something we can all do!

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