

## The First Night

### Preparation

It's true: Failing to plan is planning to fail. So consider these four things while preparing for your first meeting.

### Communication

1. **Connect** with all members by phone quick call to **welcome** them to the group.
2. **Send email** reminder a few days before Group
  - a. Giving them **Time, Location & How excited you are to have everyone together.**
  - b. **Have them confirm if they are coming**

### Food

Nothing creates conversation like food. I don't know if you've ever noticed, but strangers sitting around a table full of food are much more relaxed and talkative. Food breaks the ice and opens people up.

Be sure to have snacks. I recommend the three Cs: chips, cookies, and caffeine. In other words: something salty, something sweet, and something good to drink.

### Environment

Create a welcoming environment. People are less likely to stick around if they're uncomfortable. **Enough chairs. Turn on the lights. Burn a candle, Put a fresh hand towel in the bathroom. It's the little things**

As a side note: There are some people with the gift of hospitality reading this who have no idea why this section's here. For those of us without the gift of hospitality, or for those who are perhaps new to having a place to host (ahem, 23-year-old guys just out of college), these tips aren't always second-nature.

### Prayer

**Prayer is the easiest thing to overlook during the frantic preparation process, but it's also one of the most vital.** This isn't just a social gathering or a team meeting. Your goal as a small-group Host/Leader is not only to create community but also to make disciples, to help people become more like Jesus. And if you're going to do that well, you'll need his help to do it.

In the days leading up to the first meeting, pray for your group. Pray that God would send the right people and that those who come would connect well and find community. Pray for wisdom and discernment for yourself as the group leader. Above all, pray that God would be glorified through your group.

**NOW IT'S GO TIME: So you have prepared now it's time to Host the meeting**

### **Community**

Your main goal on the first night is for people to get to know each other. You don't need to cover material or help people grow spiritually or any of that. Just make sure people actually connect with one another. That's what will bring them back and open the door for growth. Here are a few tips to help make that happen:

- **Help people learn each others' names. You may want everyone to wear name tags the first week. You could also play a game to help remember names.** For instance, ask people to say their name and an adjective that describes them and begins with the same first letter (e.g., Silly Sarah, Thoughtful Tony, Chatty Cathy). Six years later, I still remember my friend Adam as "Average Adam" because he introduced himself that way.
- **Set aside time for conversation.** The first 30mins let people just eat and talk.
- **Greet everyone personally.** As the small-group leader, do your best to meet everyone at the door when they first come in, especially if they don't know others in the group.
- **If you notice people standing alone, talk with them and introduce them to other folks. Help group members connect with each other.**

- **Use an icebreaker question like "Tell us a story about your best friend from childhood." It may seem silly, but it helps spark conversation, and the right questions can really help a group get to know one another.**

## **Vision**

**While your first priority is building community, you have a very important second priority for the night: casting vision for the group.** The people who are part of your group want to know what you'll be doing together.

- Share why you decided to host a group and what you hope the group to gain from this time together.
- Share the CRB Life Group Covenant which is on the Leader Resource page
- Go over being on time, remind them to let you know if they won't be there ahead of time
- If you want people to take turns bringing snack each week talk about that

## **Discussion/ Prayer Request**

Simply download the question from the Leader Resource page on the CRB website or app.

**The goal is not to get through all the questions it's to get everyone talking even if you only get to a few question on week one that's ok. Have you built community and shared the vision? Then you are doing great!**

## **Lastly**

**At some point in the next day or so, you should follow up with your new group members.** You can use whatever communication medium is appropriate for your context. I personally find e-mail to be a great tool for the post-meeting follow up.

**Remind group members of any relevant details, especially the time of the next group meeting. Who is bringing snack etc...**

**Continue to pray for your group. As you get to know them better and better, you'll know how to pray specifically for each member. Most important, ask Jesus to help you all follow him more closely.**



