

BEST PRACTICES

IDEAS FOR GROUP LEADERS

ICEBREAKERS

- Use a question of the week (What was your worst Christmas present ever?).
- Two Truths and a Lie: have the group members share two things true about themselves and then one thing that is not true. The other members have to guess which one is the "lie."
- The M&M game: dump a handful of M&Ms in a paper bag. The group members reach in and grab one M&M; each color has its own question that the member has to share. (Examples: How old were you when you had your first broken bone? Tell the group about your first car. What is your greatest Christmas gift you got as a child?)
- Purchase inexpensive conversation starters cards and have each group member draw a card and answer the question on the card. Each person would have a different question. Cards can be purchased from dollar stores or online.

FOOD

- Make food a part of every group meeting- could be heavy appetizers or a full meal.
- If doing a full meal, use theme nights to guide your planning (Mexican, Italian, Soup and Salad, etc.).

BUILDING COMMUNITY

- Early in the group, assign roles for the group (Social Coordinator, Facebook Reminder Coordinator, Meal Planner, Community Outreach Coordinator, etc.)
- Have regular game nights (could be board games, video games, etc.)
- Have regular celebration nights where leaders focus on how each person has grown in their faith over the course of the group. Celebrate growth with small gifts that symbolize their growth, books or just handwritten notes.
- As a leader, it's your job to foster community with the people in your group. Do something social with every person in your group outside of normal group time.
- As a leader, when you are talking to a group member about something that you know another group member could relate to, invite the other group member to join

the discussion and then excuse yourself so the group members are primed to have a conversation separate from you.

- Take an interest in the lives of your group members. Attend their school or hobby activities to support them.
- Get away together. Trips could include skiing, the beach, a lake, or a themed retreat.
- Be intentional about protecting your discussion time from unnecessary interruptions and distraction that comes with technology (i.e. smart phones and iDevices)

DISCUSSION

- Use a whiteboard for discussion. A whiteboard can act as a visual aid for the discussion. Something happens when people see answers to a question on the board; they tend to think more through the list and apply things to their life, and then articulate them.
- Sometimes it's okay to let tangents roll. Many times the discussion will naturally come back to pertinent topics.
- Always sacrifice the discussion if a group member has a pertinent need. Take the time to focus on that group member through prayer and encouragement.
- For a particularly difficult topic, talk to a group member ahead of time about having an answer to a certain question already prepared.
- Be sensitive to the Holy Spirit, and feel freedom to stray from the discussion questions if the Spirit is moving within your group.
- Always be thinking about multiplication. Always have a mindset of wanting all Seacoasters to experience community through groups.

PRAYER

- Make a commitment to pray regularly for your group members. You could even assign each group member a certain day of the week where you are specifically interceding for them.
- Be creative during prayer time. Example: have everyone pray for the person to their left, or practice conversational prayer.
- If your group is co-ed, break off into guys and girls to pray separately- it fosters increased vulnerability.

- Lay hands on a group member who is struggling and pray over them.
- Have a prayer and praise book where group members can record their prayer needs.
- Email prayer and praise details to the group members after meeting.
- From time to time, instead of asking everyone to share their prayer request with the group, just dive right in to a time of prayer. As people begin to pray and talk to God about specific things going on in their lives, the group can join in and pray for them too.
- Share prayer requests on index cards to send home to pray for members throughout the week.