

Practical Tips for Building Fellowship

As you go about building fellowship in your small flock group, here are a few tips John and Marilyn Spilker, Small Flock Group Leaders at College Park Church, have picked up along their journey that you may also find helpful in building fellowship within your group.

In Preparation: As you prepare for your meetings...

- Pray for the Holy Spirit's leading before your group gathers together.
- Contact members, via e-mail, to remind them of the meeting.
- Prepare your home for the small flock group meeting.
- Have name tags ready for initial meetings, and when guests attend.
- Setup for snacks...and communion, as the Holy Spirit leads.
- Open your home early (15-20 minutes) for members to arrive.

Upon Arrival: As members and guests arrive for your meetings...

- Greet them warmly as they arrive and welcome them into your home.¹
- Allow time for informal discussion and sharing of experiences.
- Gather the group together for the meeting, and open with prayer.
- Introduce guests to the group, and explain why they are attending.

Get Acquainted: As new groups gather together for the first meeting, share with them *how God has been at work in forming the group*. Then provide an opportunity to get acquainted with open-ended questions. For example,

- Tell us something about yourself (i.e., name, family, job, etc.)
- What led you to attend College Park Church?
- What motivated you to become part of a small flock group?

Stimulate Discussion: As your group gets established, ask open-ended questions during fellowship time to stimulate discussion and sharing of experiences in their walk with the Lord. For example,

- How has God been at work in your life this past week? (I spy God).
- What scriptures have you been living on this past week?
- When have you felt most in fellowship and communion with God?

Or at times, you might want to ask open-ended questions that share different aspects of each other's lives, or questions to just have fun together and get to know each other in unique and different ways. For example,

- What do you do to keep your marriages alive and well?
- What was your favorite room in your house as a child, and what made it so?
- If you could go anywhere on vacation, where would you go?

¹ After your group is established, encourage late comers to come right on in, without ringing the doorbell, and join the group. This will minimize disruption and encourage people to be on time.

- How did you meet your spouse?

Continue the Process: Building fellowship is not limited to just a specified time for fellowship. It can continue throughout your meeting, as you ask open-ended questions while facilitating your group's discussion of sermon applications, sharing praise and prayer requests, etc.

Remain Alert: Remember to remain alert during your meeting, and lovingly draw each member into the discussion, as appropriate, to build a sense of unity and purpose, and encourage one another in their walk with the Lord.

Be Flexible: Also, look out for the interests of others by keeping alert to events and situations that are occurring in their lives, and be ready to appropriately engage the group as they arise. For example, stopping the discussion and praying about the situation, engaging in a service project to meet the needs of one of your members, etc.

Include Music: As appropriate, provide a time for singing and praising God. If you have a piano, gather 'round, or sing to music of a CD/Tape player, or raise your voices in a cappella.

Have Fun: Remember also to have fun together. Periodically just get together for a time of fun and fellowship. Get together in each other's homes for a pitch-in dinner, or a picnic in a park, or a backyard barbecue, etc. Invite the whole family to come along and join the fun.

Follow-up: After each meeting of your small flock group, spend some time with your co-leader in critiquing the meeting and thanking God for His leading. Then send a follow-up e-mail to all who attended with highlights of the event, including how God has been at work in the lives of your group, things your group has agreed to do, praise and prayer requests, words of encouragement, etc. This will bring closure to a great evening of fellowship, and provides you with an opportunity to reinforce key points and encourage each member in their walk with the Lord.