

Guide to Starting Your Core Family Group

I. Tips for First Core Family Group Meeting: Get to Know Each Other and Cast Vision/Expectations!

(video:<https://www.smallgroups.com/articles/2014/3-tips-for-your-first-meeting.html>)

A. Before your first meeting:

1. Contact people two days before the group begins and the day of the meeting with reminders of time, place, what the plan for childcare is, what to bring if anything.
2. Do you need to pick up name tags ahead of time?

B. During your first meeting:

1. Get people talking and bonding! Do an icebreaker together in the first 15 minutes! I usually try to go first in order to give people time to think and also to demonstrate what I am looking for in an answer. Here are some examples of icebreakers:
 - a. "Lighter" icebreakers to do first:
 - i. Play a game like Scattergories, Pictionary, etc.
 - ii. We gave each family unit a poster board and had them write/draw various thing about themselves and their family. Great way to also involve children!
 - iii. Tell a story about one of your best friends as a child.
 - iv. Tell a story about a memorable vacation.
 - v. Tell about one thing that made you laugh this week.
 - vi. Tell about one of your favorite things about your current job.
 - b. "Deeper" icebreakers (for groups that may already have somewhat of a bond or if you feel it would be appropriate for the first meeting; *to save time, you can have everyone group into 3's or 4's*):
 - i. Tell about a golden memory from your childhood, a very special moment, that you hold dear.
 - ii. Tell about someone that has deeply impacted your life.
 - iii. What is a memorable family tradition that you remember from growing up?
 - iv. If you had the necessary resources and could meet any need in the world, what would it be and why?

C. Lay out vision/expectations:

- a. "We are a Core Family Group that meets together in Jesus' name to encourage each other in our walks, which means we will be engaging in elements of UP/DOWN/IN/OUT together."
- b. "We will meet __ times a month and let's try hard to plug it into our schedules between now and June (for example) so we can really build community and pursue Jesus together."

- c. "What you can expect during our times together is eating together, some type of upward engagement with God (musical worship, communion, etc.), a time of conversational sharing together as a large group what we hear God saying, a time of sharing together/ministering to each other in smaller groups, a time of harvest prayer, releasing spiritual gifts, etc. We won't necessarily hit upon all of these areas each time, but they are all things we value and they will happen at various points of meeting together."
- d. "We will keep what you say in confidence."
- e. "Our start time is ____ and we will release you at ____, but you are free to stay longer."
- f. "We would love to be a group who honors and helps the host home tidy up after our meeting time."
- g. "Next week, we are going to begin taking turns sharing our stories/personal testimonies. We will contact two of you this week to see if you are willing to share next time."

D. After your first meeting:

- 1. Pray over your new members!
- 2. Contact each person and thank them for being there! We recommend starting a Facebook group for your Core Fam Group or some way you can all communicate!
- 3. Plan something fun to do! Plan to celebrate someone's birthday, meet at a park together (weather permitting!), plan a girls night out/guys night out, etc.!

II. Next Meetings' Format Suggestions:

- A. Eat together!
- B. Continue to develop connection!
 - a. Fun Icebreaker (as a large group or break into smaller groups)
 - b. Deeper Icebreaker (as large group or break into smaller groups)
- C. Element of UP (communion, worship), and IN (ministry to one another; can do in smaller breakout groups)
- D. Begin taking turns (one or two people per meeting) sharing your personal testimonies which are interwoven with stories of the Lord's goodness. Have one of the leaders/co-leader go first to demonstrate. Encourage members to ask questions and interact with the person who is telling their story. Follow up with praying over that person. There are many great reasons to have each person share their testimony!
 - a. Gets the focus *off* the facilitator and builds a climate of *active participation*!
 - b. Gets everyone familiar with each other's "backstory" and history with the Lord!
 - c. It magnifies and uplifts *Jesus*!
 - d. It puts the focus on someone else other than the facilitator, thus laying the precedent that the facilitator will *not* be the primary "talker."
 - e. Sharing stories are essential for *bonding*!

- f. Ending with prayer for that person establishes a climate that *releases* people to use their giftings to declare blessings and encouragement over each other, one of the major goals of the group!
- E. Hand out "Harvest Prayer Sheet" and give time during a meeting for everyone to fill it out with the names of people that surround them in their spheres of influence! Take time to break into smaller groups and pray for those on each other's harvest prayer lists!

Sample Schedule for the First Evening:

5:30-5:45 - People arrive, mingle. Have an icebreaker conversation starter or game ready and as people enter, they can participate too after being greeted and introduced around ("We are all talking about the favorite thing we enjoy about our jobs!" or "We are all playing Pictionary, have a seat and join in!")

5:45-6:30 - People eat, mingle, talk.

6:30-7:15 - Explain to the children the expectations for the home in front of their parents, so both adults and children know the expectations. After children go to their area, present a deeper icebreaker question to the group and have everyone take turns answering.

7:15-7:25 - Cast vision/lay out expectations as specified above. See if anyone has questions.

7:25-7:30 - Close in prayer, asking the Spirit to enter the group and cause a real fellowship of the Spirit to occur! If 7:30 is official end time, you can release people to leave if they want, but you can also offer that people can stay longer (if the host wants!). You can offer to talk/pray with people about any needs they may have.