

Discussion Skills

Discussion leading involves asking good questions and helping the group grapple with these questions and their answers – as a group. Your role is to keep the discussion cross-centered and grace-filled in order to lead men and women toward hope in the character and promises of the living God. Our goal is gospel-motivated, faith-fueled growth through understanding and applying God’s Word together.

The Goal is Application

- A. The goal of discussing a book or sermon is not simply to get new information or have a stimulating conversation about someone’s ideas. We want the discussion to move from gaining a basic grasp of the material to allowing each member of the group to make personal application to his or her life. When leading a discussion, think of two simple steps: *review* and *apply*.
- B. Review – During the review, the goal is to make sure that everyone really does understand the most critical points of the sermon or lesson. Before you can effectively move to application, most if not all of your listeners should grasp the key points that they will seek to apply. The Review time is setting up the Application time.
 - a. To establish context, it is often helpful to begin with a broad brush to help orient your listener’s thoughts with yours. Think about getting everyone broadly on the same page first. Sometimes, you may even remind members of what you discussed during your last time together.
 - b. Most lessons or sermons have more points of application than you can cover in one group discussion. Your next task is to narrow the focus of your review to the portions of the topic that you want to highlight in your application time. Think carefully about time constraints here. Effective application requires time to process and discuss. For most discussions, one to three topics will be all that you have time to work through in the application step.
 - c. It can be helpful to ask questions during the review to determine if your listeners are tracking with you. Be careful that your questions in the review time don’t sidetrack the discussion.
 - d. A typical time budget for your review would be 20-40% of your available discussion time.

- C. Application - is the place where we put into practice Jesus' words, "Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them." (John 13:17). This step is the goal of your discussion time.
- a. Application questions should encourage the group to grapple with how these ideas make a claim on their own lives.
 - b. Be careful of asking leading questions during the application time. If the group gets the sense that you are only looking for a "right" answer – i.e. the answer *you* want – they typically will not explore the topic together but seek to tell you what you want to hear.
 - c. Questions that only require a "yes" or "no" answer are usually ineffective. For most people, they lead the discussion nowhere.
 - i. To move a discussion forward, you build on the comments of the group:
 - ii. Clarification: "Could you restate what you said?"
 - iii. Re-direction: If someone is leading the discussion on a tangent, bring it back, "Thanks for your thoughts on that. I wonder if anyone else ... (restate your question)."
 - iv. Extension/open-ended: "Could you expound on that? What do you think about what Heather said? Has anyone else ever felt conviction in this area? What did you do? How did you respond?"
 - d. For more ideas on how to think about good application questions, read the "Writing good application questions" article in the Resources section of your binder.

Some sample application questions:

- What do the truths taught in this article or passage mean to you here and now?
- As you read this article (listened to the sermon), how were you convicted of sin in your life?
- How does knowing this truth about God make a difference in your life? How can you apply this truth?

- What are the implications of this to you and me?
- How can you change, now that you understand this?
- Can you see a command in this passage that we are required to obey?
- Is there an example you can follow here?
- What does repentance look like in this situation? Where have you seen yourself fall short in these areas and how should you cultivate change?
- Now that we have learned these things what can we do to help us walk in obedience?
- How should you change because of what we have learned about God?

The Art of Asking Good Questions

About this Handout: Asking good questions is one of the most important things that a Small Group leader does. The following pages represent reflections on my four years as a Small-Group-Question-Asker. During that time I had the privilege of leading two separate groups, both of which were very different. In my opinion, the question asking principles contained in this handout should hold true for almost any group. I have identified eight different kinds of questions and tried to identify the strengths and potential pitfalls of each. I have also included sample questions. This document evidences a trajectory of growth in my life as a leader but also gives proof that I continue to have much room for growth as well. I will forever be amazed that the Master Shepherd would use a silly sheep like me...to Him be the Glory! Amen.

The Questions:

“The Opener”—Used at the outset of the discussion time, before any other teaching or discussion takes place.

Benefits: 1) Helps transition from everyday concerns and distractions and get people to “reorient” toward biblical fellowship; 2) Encourages broad participation right at the outset; 3) Can help set a tone of encouragement and hopefully establish a trajectory for the evening; 4) Can help set a tone of joy and perhaps even encourage some holy laughter; 5) Might be used to raise a topic that you will return to later in the meeting; 6) Possible way to get feedback from people about the group in a non-threatening way; 7) Provide people with a public opportunity to encourage others.

Dangers: 1) Can start to feel artificial or programmatic; 2) Can usurp time from other, more important questions; 3) Can be distracting and irrelevant rather than an aid to the content of the lesson; 4) Can pave the way for a man-centered agenda rather than a Godward-Focused meeting.

Examples¹:

- If someone who was totally unfamiliar with Small Groups asked you why you attend Small Group, what would be the first thing that came to your mind?²
- What is your all-time favorite hymn and why?
- What does the way our culture spends money reveal about the values it holds?

¹ Most of the examples in this document are “field tested” by me and commended to you as helpful examples (with the exception of the “Bombers,” of course). But no question ever comes with a guarantee of “success.”

² If you ever use this one, notice that no one will say, “Because of the great teaching.” That should be a humbling reminder that our role as leader is not so much to teach truth as to help people apply truth of the gospel to their lives.

- Why have you chosen to make CrossWay your church home?
- Why do you love the cross?
- What is your favorite Bible story and why?

Comments: I used to open every meeting with an “Opener Question.” Now, for some reason, I rarely do. Perhaps as a group grows in the depth of their relationships and fellowship with one another these types of questions become less important. (Or, perhaps I’m getting lazy!)

“**The Bomber**” – Unless you find yourself in need of humbling, you probably want to avoid this one. A bomber is a question that leaves the leader’s lips and sort of hangs there in the air while everyone is silent and a feeling of awkward tension mounts. Perhaps beads of perspiration begin to glisten on the leader’s forehead and somewhere in the distance a lone dog barks. At this point the leader might try to re-frame the question in a desperate attempt to get *someone* to say *something*, but alas, no one is willing to take the bait and bail out the leader so he finally lets the bomber crash to the ground, picks up what’s left of his pride, and moves on to the next question.³

Rather than talk about the benefits and dangers of “The Bomber,” let’s ask a different question: Why do questions bomb?

- Because the question is confusingly worded and no one knows what you’re talking about
- Because the question is so blatantly obvious that everyone’s intelligence is insulted and no one can believe that you’re actually asking that question so they assume they must have misunderstood the question and so no one answers
- Because the question is so theologically complex that everyone is afraid that if they answer they will say something that’s either stupid or heretical
- Because the question is basically just a re-wording of a question that you have already asked that night and no one answers because they don’t want to repeat themselves
- Because the question is so wildly vague that anything would be a right answer

Examples:

- Name something good
- Explain the Trinity
- 1 Corinthians 13:13 mentions three things: faith, hope and love. Can you name one of the three things 1 Corinthians 13:13 mentions?

³ Okay, so that’s a little over-dramatic, but if you’ve been there, you know what I’m talking about.

- What is a sin issue that you're struggling with that hinders your evangelism?⁴

Comments: Don't be so hard on yourself, everyone drops the occasional bomb. Guard your heart from two sinful tendencies: 1) To think, "What's the matter with this group? They're not even trying. Why can't they answer this simple question?" or 2) To think, "What's the matter with me? My questions are so stupid and now everyone thinks I'm an idiot. I'm never leading Small Group again." Both of those postures of the heart are equally sinful and unhelpful.

I find that if a question, for whatever reason, has the potential to be a bomber then it is a good idea to ask your wife ahead of time. She might laugh and say, "You're right, that question belongs in the garbage can," in which case you can thank her for her candor and heed her loving and wise counsel. Or she might say, "No, I think that's a good question," in which case you should tell her to be prepared with her own answer so that if no one says anything for twenty seconds after you ask it then she should jump in and defuse the bomb with her answer.

"The Content Question"—This question is looking for a specific "correct" answer. It is usually based on the teaching material for the lesson. Thus, it is either a specific question about the reading that people have done for the meeting or about the sermon that is being discussed.

Benefits: 1) Provides a gentle way to encourage people to come prepared to Small Group; 2) Allows the leader to speak less and others to speak more; 3) Perhaps introduces a helpful thought or perspective that the leader has not considered; 4) Provides a context whereby people in the group can ask questions about the content of the material.

Dangers: 1) Someone might say something heretical and then you have to correct them in front of everyone (this is *always* awkward!); 2) You might have intended to go in a specific direction and this question might lead the discussion in an unintended, unhelpful direction; 3) It is likely that you can articulate the content of the material better and more concisely than other members of the group since you've had more time to think about it; 4) People might disagree and therefore this becomes a debate rather than biblical fellowship; 5) People might feel intimidated or put on the spot if they don't know the answer to a content question; 6) People who have not had a chance to prepare will feel excluded and might mentally "check out" for the remainder of the meeting and might be less inclined to come next time they are unprepared.

Examples:

- What were the three main points of last Sunday's sermon?

⁴ This is, of course, a perfectly legitimate question but people won't know how to answer it if you've *already* asked the question: "What is a sanctification issue in your life that makes it tough for you to share the gospel with others?" See the point? The same question, asked two different ways, will always bomb.

- What was the main point of the chapter that we read for tonight?
- What are the fruits of the Spirit?⁵
- Jason said there were four essential elements to hit when sharing the gospel with a non-believer, who can name one of them?⁶

Comments: Sometimes these questions are very helpful but they are to be used with caution. I often find that it is far preferable to teach any content that you want communicated rather than frame it in the form of a question. I usually choose to briefly reiterate the content I want to convey myself and then I ask a question related to the content rather than asking a “Content Question.”⁷

One thing to *always* avoid: *Do not call on people by name to answer a content question.* Even if you are *sure* that this person will have the right answer, don’t do it. It will introduce a dynamic into the group that you do not want because immediately every insecure person in the group will start to wonder if they are going to be called on next.⁸

“The Critique Question”—This question is basically asking people whether or not they agree with a particular point in the reading or the sermon. This kind of question ought to be used *very* sparingly and never ought to be used with regard to a sermon (especially one of mine!).

Benefits: 1) Encourages critical thinking rather than a blind acceptance of other people’s ideas; 2) May provide a helpful window into the heart of some of your group members; 3) Could provide a much needed corrective to potentially confusing false teaching; 4) Allows people to raise legitimate biblical concerns about the content of the material.

Dangers: 1) Encourages a critical attitude; 2) Feeds the human tendency to pride and the natural tendency of the human heart to resist authority; 3) Potentially damages any positive benefit that may be gleaned from the material; 4) Raises questions in some of the less secure peoples’ minds as to whether or not they can trust anything; 5) Comes painfully close to the Biblical category of “grumbling and complaining”; 6) Comes uncomfortably close to violating the spirit of Hebrews 13:17—*Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.*⁹

Examples:

⁵ This could easily turn into a bomber, you really have to know your group: Some groups love the challenge of trying to think of them without looking them up, others will just stare at you with a glazed look and think, “He’s the leader, doesn’t he know?”

⁶ Just in case you’re wondering: God, Sin, Christ, Salvation (!)

⁷ This is either sound advice or a reflection of the fact that I’m a tightly wound control-freak when it comes to leading a Care Group discussion. You be the judge.

⁸ I was that insecure person for years and I know the horrors of participating in a group with a loose-cannon leader. It stinks.

⁹ While it’s theoretically possible that you might be edified by asking critical questions about your material, in my opinion your time would be better spent if you just told people to sit still and count the cracks in the ceiling.

- How many of you thought Jason’s third point was totally nuts?
- Do you think Jason’s suggestions for application were realistic or stupid?
- Was there anything you disagreed with from the reading for tonight?
- If you wrote a chapter on this topic, what would you say differently?

Comments: The reason I would discourage this form of question is not because we want to discourage critical thinking, but rather, because we want to train ourselves so that the first impulse of our hearts is not, “What do I disagree with?” but “How can I benefit from this and apply it to my life?” Asking the “Critique Question” encourages the wrong kind of mental habit. It is possible that, on occasion, someone might legitimately question and even disagree with a sermonic point, but the last thing we want is to cultivate an unnecessarily critical attitude towards the pulpit.¹⁰

It is perhaps more likely that there will be something to disagree with if you’re reading a book for your Small Group lesson. But even in this case, hopefully there are more things to agree with than to disagree with (otherwise, why did you assign the book in the first place?) If you really think that something in the reading needs to be addressed and corrected, then correct it yourself, or *very sparingly*, and depending on the maturity level of your group, you might want to raise a question like this: “Do you agree with the point that is made on the top of page 108? Why or why not? If the author was here, what questions might you have for him about this point?”¹¹ ...and.¹²

“The Subjective Question”—This is the question where each person is the expert and there are no wrong answers.

Benefits: 1) Allows people the freedom to speak on a topic they are intimately familiar with (themselves); 2) Allows people to share from the heart about things that are personal and meaningful to them; 3) Can rescue a discussion from the land of theory and make it more personal, relevant and practical; 4) Allows other people to bless the group with their insights, experiences and gifts; 5) Protects the group from having to listen too long to the boring voice of the leader.¹³

Dangers: 1) Be careful not to blur the lines between the Content Question and the Subjective Question (I.e.: Biblical truth *is not* subjective); 2) Be careful that the ultimate topic of conversation is God and not us and our feelings; 3) Be careful that the particularly

¹⁰ There are certainly places where it is legitimate to raise questions and critiques about sermons, but I’m suggesting that the Small Group meeting is not one of them.

¹¹ If you find yourself asking these types of questions with any kind of regularity, then that is a sure sign of a problem.

¹² A double footnote, I’ve never done this before! I just wanted to make the point that you might have a member in your group that consistently wants to raise criticisms whether or not you’re asking “Critical Questions.” That’s a serious issue but not altogether on topic for tonight’s meeting. You’ll have to read my Crowd Control Handout to get the answer. Now, would you please try to stay on task? Thanks.

¹³ I’m not projecting this on you, but it’s true in my case.

self-centered communicators of the group are not tempted to hi-jack the meeting and treat it like their own personal blog.¹⁴

Examples:

- If someone observed you every minute of the day last week, and not only observed your actions but also read your mind, what would they say is the most important thing in your life?
- Tell us about someone in your life who has been a portrait of godliness for you.
- Tell about a time the Lord specifically answered one of your prayers.
- What is the main thing that keeps you from sharing your faith?
- Where are you tempted to self-sufficiency in your own life?
- What's the biggest temptation to sin that you faced this past week? How did the Lord deliver you from it? If you stumbled, what should you have done differently?

Comments: If framed properly, this can be a very effective question and every meeting should include a couple of questions in this category. Never turn a "Content Question" into a "Subjective Question."¹⁵ But by all means get your group talking about real life. We are individuals (subjects) and it's okay for us to be "subjective" and talk about ourselves, as long as we're talking biblically and not pretending that we're the center of the universe. Oftentimes it is only when the first "Subjective Question" gets asked that the group stops batting around abstract theological ideas and really enters into true Biblical Fellowship

"The Edification Question"—This is when you give the group the opportunity to build one another up by pointing out evidences of grace.

Benefits: 1) It is really encouraging; 2) It helps people identify areas of growth which can sometimes be hard to self-identify; 3) It allows people to exercise gifts of encouragement; 4) It deepens the love people have for one another and knits hearts together; 5) It brings glory to God, by highlighting His work of sanctification.

Dangers: 1) If done too often, it can feel disingenuous; 2) You might not have anything nice to say about someone (which is always awkward); 3) It's possible (although very unlikely in a well-taught group) that this would take the attention off God and put it on man.

Examples:

- Point out an evidence of grace in someone else in the group
- Tell how someone else in the group is bearing a particular fruit of the spirit
- Point out a spiritual gift in someone else in the group

¹⁴ Yes Marco, I do know what a blog is.

¹⁵ "What does this text mean to you?" is never a good question.

- Tell us something that your spouse does particularly well to encourage your sanctification
- Point out positive things you've observed in the parenting of the other couples in the group

Comments: This should be a regular and ongoing feature of Care Group life together. The leaders *need* to set a tone of encouragement in the group; otherwise this will feel artificial and patronizing. But when people are trained to identify and point out evidences of grace as a matter of course, then these moments of doing so publicly will become sweet times of biblical fellowship and encouragement. Don't go to the well too often here, but make public encouragement a regularly recurring theme and do it in a way that is creative and diverse (not boring and predictable).

If you're going to ask an "Edification Question," come prepared with something to say about each person in the group and keep track of who says what about whom. Then you can interject your own comments and make sure that everyone receives some encouragement and no one goes home feeling like that kid that never got picked for the sports teams.¹⁶

"The Application Question"—This is a question that challenges people to apply the content of the lesson to their own personal life in some practical way.

Benefits: 1) Gets people thinking biblically and practically about their lives; 2) Provides a platform for true Biblical fellowship and enables us to apply Hebrews 10:24 in a concrete, public way; 3) Helps us to pray specifically and intelligently about one another; 4) lends itself to accountability; 5) Provides opportunities to grow together as a group (since application is not always personal but can be corporate as well).

Dangers: 1) Some Christians, especially those who are younger in the faith and have not yet experienced the joy of true biblical fellowship, might be overwhelmed and turned off by the intensity of some application questions

Examples:

- Name one thing that you can do this week that will have the effect of increasing your faith
- What's one specific way you can serve your spouse around the house this week?
- Name one non-believer in your life that you can start praying for
- What's one specific way you can start extending "hospitality" to guests at our Sunday morning service

¹⁶ I know, I know, this sounds like one of those "everyone who competes gets a prize" type of things. I once received an award in the Vecchitto Care Group for making the "Most Juvenile" ornament at the Christmas party (an award I most certainly did not deserve). But, in this case, as downright corny as it sounds, we really *are* all winners in Jesus Christ and you ought to have at least *something* encouraging to say to everyone in the group even if it's, "Hey, you'll be dead soon and then you'll definitely be able to put that sin to death."

- What's one concrete way you can put pride to death in your life this week?

Comments: This is where you should be aiming throughout the meeting. A whole meeting of nothing but Application Questions would probably feel a little heavy handed but sooner or later you need to get here. One good application question is often enough and it is unlikely that you would ever need more than two thoughtful application questions. (Two concrete points of application is more than enough for most of us and one is usually sufficient).

Notice, "Application Questions" are not simply trying to identify areas of sanctification that need attention (that would be a "Subjective Question") but are seeking to identify concrete ways to approach those sanctification issues.

Do not think these "Application Questions" should be exclusively about the mortification of sin. I'm all in favor of mortifying sin, but "putting on" questions should be proportionally greater than "putting off" questions (I.e.: talk *more* about being holy and living righteously than about sin...but by all means, talk about both!)

"The Accountability Question"—This is a follow-up to the "Application Question" to see if our sanctified intentions were translated into holy actions.

Benefits: 1) Can be a means of grace to encourage people to faithfully apply the things that are talked about in Care Group; 2) Encourages humility and depth of fellowship among the Care Group members; 3) Is a concrete means of expressing care for others

Dangers: 1) Can lend itself to emphasizing works over grace; 2) Can lead to condemnation for those who are not faithfully applying the things talked about in Care Groups; 3) Can tempt people to judge others; 4) Can tempt people to pride in their own sanctification (as ironic as that sounds!); 5) Can intimidate people and scare them away (unless you're indwelt by the Spirit, this can feel pretty "cultish"); 6) Can tempt people to ignore their spouse as their primary human means of sanctification

Examples:

- Did you do the thing you said you were gonna do?
- Did you not do the thing you said you were not gonna do?
- I think you get the point

Comments: Despite the fact that I listed twice as many dangers as benefits, I think accountability questions are essential (they just require caution). It seems to me that they work best either one-on-one or in the separate men's and women's times. However, there are certain topics (like evangelism or personal devotional life, for example) that really lend themselves to accountability in the full group setting.

I have found that even more important than asking the "Accountability Question" is asking probing questions that help people identify the unseen root-sin-issues and then

applying the Gospel to those issues. But that is the subject of the Accountability Handout, not The Question Handout, which is now done (except the conclusion where I tie it all together and end on an encouraging, edifying note).

Conclusion. Well, there you go. More than you ever wanted to know about asking questions. Though I've listed an awful lot of questions, I've found that as I've grown as a Care Group leader, I use less questions than I did when I first started leading Care Groups. I'm often amazed at how few questions it takes to lead a truly edifying Care Group. I think that means my questions have gotten better. But maybe it means I've just gotten lazy with my time management.

One last thing: Be bold and don't be afraid to fail. Care Group leadership requires creativity but if you're anything like me, then your creative ideas aren't always good ideas. That's okay. Your group will appreciate the effort and some of your creative ideas will go over amazingly well. Though laughter and entertainment are *never* the main goal in Care Group, you'd be surprised how much the Spirit will get done through your humble, sincere efforts to make Care Group *both* edifying and enjoyable (which ought *never* to be considered two contradictory terms). Be a creative, bold, humble, effective question asker to the glory of God. God will honor that.

May the Lord spare you my failures and grant you wonderful, Christ-exalting victories. Not to us but to Him be the Glory! Thank you so much for sacrificially investing in this local church by being Small Group leaders.

Getting to Know You Questions

PERSONAL

- What day of your life would you most like to re-live and why?
- In what area of your life would you like greater peace and why?
- What have you been praying about recently?
- What is your most important decision in the near future?

PARENTS AND SIBLINGS

- Where were you born?
- Where were you raised?
- How many brothers and sisters do you have?
- Tell a story from your childhood or adolescence that gives insight into your family.

SPOUSE AND CHILDREN

- How did you meet your spouse?
- How does your spouse “complete” you?
- How many children, if any, do you have and what are their names and ages?
- When your children are grown, what would make you think you were successful in raising them?
- If your spouse and children could write your epitaph, what would you want it to say?
- What creative things have you done to cultivate romance in your marriage?
- What creative ways have you made memories with your children?
- What dreams do you have for your future marriage and your family?

VOCATION AND EDUCATION

- Where did you go to school?
- What did you study or what do you wish you had studied?
- Where do you work, and what do you do?
- If you could do anything but what you do now, what would it be?

HOBBIES AND INTERESTS

- What do you enjoy doing with your spare time?
- What have you never done that you wish you could do?

GOD AND CHURCH

- What church, if any, were you raised in?
- What were you taught about God as a child?
- What has been your most significant encounter with God?
- Describe the state of your current relationship with God.
- Tell us how you experienced conversion?
- What has helped you grow in your walk with God?
- Who has been the most significant influence in your relationship with God and why?
- What would you like your relationship with God to be five years from now?
- When you die and stand before God, what would you like him to say to you?
- How are you serving in the church? Is there another ministry you would like to get involved in?
- What has God been teaching you?
- What are you reading?

EVIDENCES OF GRACE QUESTIONS

- What area of growth in your (or your spouse's) character are you most encouraged about in the last 3-6 months?
- What specific evidences of God's grace have you observed in your -children, small group, friends, spouse, roommates- in the last week?

- What are you be most encouraged about in your walk with God?
- What has been the most life- giving conviction you have experienced in the last month?
- How have you seen the Lord at work through you or your -friends, spouse- in ways that are not explainable by human effort, in the past several weeks?
- What things are you most thankful for in your -church, spouse, friends, workplace, and family?
- What have you been giving thanks to God for this week?

Getting to Know You – Group Ideas

- Start the meeting with an icebreaker activity. Having dinner together is always an easy way to start. Begin by telling your stories. You don't have to get to everyone the first week. You may want to ask two or three people to share about their lives. As the leader, you can set the tone and an example by sharing first.
- Have group members bring a few photos from their childhood and introduce their family members.
- Sit together at church meetings.
- Ride together to special church events like conferences or retreats.
- Room together at events involving hotel stays. Arrange for the group to eat meals together at these events.
- Establish ways the group can be together outside of a meeting, like a "supper (or dessert) club."
- Couples: Have group members bring photos of their wedding and share about their courtship and engagement.
- Thanksgiving dinner: Share a Thanksgiving dinner together and then play a game after dinner.
- Watch major sporting events together. Assign a responsible person to monitor the advertising and to switch channels when needed.
- Take a retreat together (or just as men or women) to seek God together.
- Spend an evening playing board games together.
- Take a one-day fun retreat to a park. Spend the day there, play games. Have a cookout and fellowship together around a fire.
- Video scavenger hunt: Come up with a list of things that each team has to find, do, act out or interview. Everything has to be videotaped. The best size for each team is 4-5 people so that everyone can fit in one car. Allow at least an hour for the teams to hunt. After the hunt, go to someone's home and watch the videos.
- Small group cookouts: Have cookouts at different homes or parks.
- Play group games or just hang out and fellowship.
- Christmas party: Exchange "white elephant" (i.e. silly or old) gifts, play games, sing carols and worship.
- Go camping together.

- Go hiking together followed by gathering at someone's home or a restaurant near the trail afterwards.
- Take a trip to local tourist destinations.
- Go out for breakfast as a group, or as men or women.
- Spontaneously invite people to go on a picnic with you or to come over for coffee after the Sunday meeting.
- Have a ladies' tea party.
- Play miniature golf together.
- Discuss topics that will get people laughing together, such as "tell us your worst vacation", or "the dumbest thing you have ever done."
- Plan times to have the group together when their children are able to participate in the activities.
- Scale the climbing wall at a sporting goods store.
- Rotate responsibility for a monthly hospitality night among your members. Be sure to release anyone who is not in a place to extend hospitality.
- Take a group photo and make sure everyone has a copy for their refrigerator.

Find Ways to Celebrate Growth, Transitions and Milestones

- Point out the people who are taking steps of relational growth and tell them how encouraging this is to the group.
- Ask people to share in the group context how they are benefiting from growing relationships. Allow them to share their stories of what's happening and how they are getting to know people better.
- Identify sanctification. Honor people who are growing by sharing specifics of their growth with the group.
- Celebrate conversions of friends and family of group members.
- Recognize significant achievement of life goals and life transitions: promotions, graduations, new job, etc..
- Celebrate family joys: engagements, weddings, births, a child's graduation, baptisms, salvation and birthdays.