

10 Ways to be a Great Small Group Member

1. BE ON TIME (BUT NOT TOO EARLY), AND LEAVE ON TIME.

Arriving on time respects everyone else in the group, especially the hosts and leaders who have prepared. If you struggle getting places on time, plan to get there 10 minutes early and read in the car until it's time. Seriously, this is a great step to take.

On the other hand, it's also hard on the leaders and group hosts if members arrive too early. There are always last-minute preparations taking place for the meeting or a needed few moments of rest before everyone shows up. Being on time, but not too early, helps start the meeting in the right direction.

It's possible to foster a warm environment while also helping the group stay on track...so that you can leave on time. The host/leader may have obligations later. They may need to clean up and get kids or themselves in bed. Help them love hosting by helping at ending time. So when it's close to ending time, start moving chairs back, help with dishes, or do what is needed together. This creates a warm, family atmosphere.

2. LOOK ENGAGED IN THE DISCUSSION.

Speaking in front of a group is one of the most intimidating things in life for a lot of people. It's especially difficult if the people in the room seem disengaged in the discussion. When I am leading a group, I always look for the people looking back for encouragement.

One of the best ways you can help your group leader out is to be fully present in the moment. Don't constantly check your phone for the latest scores or stare out a window the whole time. Occasionally give visual cues, like a nod of the head, that you are fully engaged in the conversation.

3. BE THE FIRST TO ANSWER A QUESTION (BUT NOT EVERY TIME).

A big part of being engaged in the meeting is answering questions during the Bible study. When the leader tosses out a question, the silence that follows can be super uncomfortable. It's always a relief when someone steps in to answer the question or offer an opinion. That answer may also be the catalyst that gets more people talking.

However, it's important to not be the first person to answer every question so that more people have the opportunity to jump in with their thoughts. An over-talker will dissuade a lot of people from answering. If you are a talker, be purposeful just listening for a few questions so that others will be encouraged to share.

4. BE QUICK TO READ SCRIPTURE.

Just like it's awkward when no one answers a question right away, it's the same when no one volunteers to read the Scripture passage. Most of us have the Bible on our phones now, so be that person who volunteers quickly.

5. HELP HEAD OFF RABBIT TRAILS AND GOSSIP.

Some rabbit trails are inevitable in a discussion. The trick is getting it back on topic before the whole meeting is off the rails. Instead of waiting for the group leader to have to step in and bring everyone back, offer a helpful comment that gets the discussion back on track.

The prayer time can also easily slip into gossip or problem-solving. When someone shares a request, the group doesn't need to find all the specifics, try to solve a problem, or tell about things this reminds them of. Acknowledgement and prayer is enough.

There is never an appropriate time to speak poorly of someone else (whether they are in the group or not).

6. THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO HELP THE LEADER. YOU COULD:

- Always jot down the prayer requests and plan for the next meeting, and then send those to the whole group.
- Volunteer to take a turn being on Kid Duty. Some groups have an adult or two in a nearby room with kids during all or part of the lesson. Other groups just need a designated adult to check on the kids several times during the meeting. This is a big blessing to the parents, and it's great when people can take turns doing this.
- Help with meal planning.
- One way to take some of the load off of the leader is by offering to organize a fun outing or a serving opportunity for the group to participate in.

7. OCCASIONALLY HOST THE GROUP MEETING.

Now that we understand how much work it is to host a group every week, it would be a big relief for someone to offer to take that responsibility occasionally. It's also nice for the group to meet in a different environment. A new location can lead to a different perspective. If your home won't work, maybe a park would.

8. ENCOURAGE EVERY KID THERE.

We want kids to love coming to small group time. Talk to them, play a game before things start, help them if there is a meal. Let them know you are praying for them.

9. PRAY FOR YOUR GROUP LEADER(S).

Stepping up to lead a group is no small task. Group leaders are asked to spiritually shepherd the people in their care. This responsibility comes with a lot of weight. Satan loves to attack those who are helping pull people out of darkness and into the light.

10. PRAY FOR MORE LEADERS.

The only way we are going to fulfill Jesus' Great Commission of making disciples is by starting new groups for new people. We will need new disciple makers to carry on the work that Jesus started. Maybe that person will be you.

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