

Kings Valley Church

Tribes Kit Solutions

At some point, most leaders feel very overwhelmed and under-qualified for the task of leading others. In those moments, we need tools that help.

This TribeKit is a Quick Reference Guide for Your Tribe.

Each section provides simple tips and solutions to help you plan, prepare, and overcome challenges you and your tribe may face. We encourage you to browse through the topics and partner with your assigned coach and pastor whenever possible to implement new strategies and troubleshoot.

KV Community Pastor, Mark Worth

Table Of Contents:

- 1. 5 Ways to Get Your Group Going*
- 2. 14 Tools Every Leader Needs*
- 3. 16 Ideas for Places to Meet*
- 4. 5 Tribe Child Care Solutions*
- 5. 12 Ways To Decide What Your Group Will Study*
- 6. 7 Roles to Get Group Members More Involved*
- 7. 8 Do's and Don'ts For Your First Meeting*
- 8. 13 Practical Ways to Make Every Meeting Count*
- 9. 7 Specific Personality Dynamics and Ways to Deal with Them*
- 10. 40 Questions to Help You Stay Spiritually Focused*
- 11. 18 Fun Small Group Activities*
- 12. 7 Basic ways to Deal with Problems in Your Group*
- 13. 11 Steps to Take When You Know it's Time to Go*
- 14. 13 Approaches to Group Prayer*
- 15. 3 Ways to Gauge if it's Time to End your Group*

#1 - 5 Ways to Get Your Group Going

Answering the “5 W’s and H” – that is the *who, what, when, where, why,* and *how* questions about your group are the key ways to get started.

Who’s Your Audience?

The first key of a strong and successful group is knowing, “Who are we trying to reach?”

Who is this group for? Get Specific!

Is your group for couples, men only, women only, individuals of a certain age?

Perhaps your group is for seekers or new Christians, for people of all ages and stages, or for people who are mature in their faith?

Looking at what kind of people your group is for will help you determine who your audience is.

What do you want them to do?

Next think through what you’d like the people who learn of the opportunity to do.

Is your group going to focus on in-depth bible-study, service-oriented, or focused on specific issues or activity?

Is it primarily a relational group, a learning group or an influencing group?

Try to be as clear as you can be in defining what your group is, and by doing so you’ll reflect what it is not.

Why should they join your group?

This is the buy in. As people attempt to balance competing time demands, people ask “What’s in it for me?”

What is the end goal of the group?

Why do I need this?

What life change do you want to see happen?

Answering the why will be a big help especially in promoting your group.

Where and when are you going to have your group?

What are the specifics about where are you going to meet?

Are we going to meet at a church? In a home?

Are we going to provide childcare?

What time are we going to start and finish?

How am I going to promote our group?

Of course, it's natural that you'll promote your group in your church, and a variety of ways exist to do this. But did you know that the most effective form of promotion is word of mouth. Make people aware of your group.

Final Question: Are you Praying?

As you seek to answer these questions for your group in your church and community, keep in mind the love that led Jesus to weep as he overlooked Jerusalem (Luke 19:41)

There are helpless, hopeless, and hurting people in your church and community who need to hear about Jesus and the needs you are helping to meet in your Tribe. Pray that Jesus' heart is yours and that this is reflected not only how you serve as a leader but in every aspect of getting the word out as well. Pray that God will connect people in need with the opportunity that exists in your group.

#2 - 4 Tools Every Leader Needs

Good carpenters need fully stocked toolboxes. Without tools, their hands are tied no matter how skilled they may be. Small group leaders also require a certain set of tools. You'll use some tools all the time; others might be tucked away in your toolbox, accessible but not immediately needed.

1. The study or lesson

It is a scary thing to arrive at your meeting and realize that you forgot to prepare to lead the study. "Winging it" often results in misguided discussion and the sharing of ignorance. Even more important than bringing the lesson is knowing the content of the lesson. You must study the lesson so you can know the material and communicate it effectively. Leaders who understand the material have a greater ability to help people apply it to their lives.

2. An icebreaker or warm-up

Group members arrive each week with many different things on their minds: traffic jams, unruly kids, frustration about work, and so forth. People don't have an innate ability to jump right into a deep discussion about spiritual things. They need to warm up to spiritual conversation. They need to be prepared to reveal their heart to others. This is the purpose of a warm-up or icebreaker. You can break the ice in one of two ways. You can strike up casual conversation as people arrive, asking people questions like, "What did you do today?" "How was work?" or "You told me (insert specific situation). How did that go?" A second approach is more formal. To start off the meeting, you can ask an icebreaker question. Some examples: "What would be your ideal vacation?" "Who was your hero when you were growing up?" "When you retire, what do you want to do?"

3. Worship songs

If your group worships together, choose the songs before the meeting starts. You don't want to be thinking about such things as people are arriving, because it could communicate that you don't care about your group members. Many group leaders delegate the leading of worship to a musically gifted group member. If you do, you should still communicate with the worship leader before the group meeting to make sure that all is in order.

4. Worship sheets

Make sure that every small group member has a copy of the words for the worship songs. Pass these out every week, even when everyone knows the songs. That way, if you have visitors, they won't face the embarrassing situation of sitting in silence while all of the "insiders" sing at the top of their lungs to memorized songs.

5. Your heart

You can do everything right as a leader. You can prepare the lesson, organize the worship, and make sure everything is arranged, but these are ancillary to your engaged

heart. If you don't prepare and bring your heart, people see it. They know the difference between a leader who is just doing a job and one who really cares. Leading a group isn't just another chore to accomplish each week. It's a calling -- a lifestyle of caring for God's people.

6. The presence of Christ

Jesus said, "For where two or three come together in my name, there am I "with them" (Matthew 18:20). You can stock your leadership belt with the highest-quality tools, but if you fail to use the tool that matters the most, you fail. You can easily rely on top quality, published small group study guides and worship CDs that make it easy to sing together. But good lessons and great singing don't change lives. Jesus does. He promised to be present with those who meet in his name.

7. Extra study guides

If your group is working through a published study guide, have two or three extra copies for unexpected guests. This helps with the process of connecting them to the activities of the group.

8. List of group members

Keep an updated list of current group members with names, phone numbers, e-mail addresses, and birthdays.

9. Prayer list

You may have your own method for keeping prayer requests, but if not; use a blank sheet of paper to list all the names of your small group members, leaving space after each name. Write down prayer needs that you learn of during the group's meetings or in other conversations. It's best to write down these needs as they are shared so you don't forget the specifics. You could also send out the prayer requests by email so group members can remember the request during the week.

10. Calendar

Bringing your calendar allows you to easily make arrangements to connect with group members during the week and to set dates for future group gatherings.

11. Directions to the location of next week's meeting

If your small group moves from house to house, you will want to have copies of a map to the next meeting's host home. This makes it easier for newcomers. It also lessens the need to call people the night before the meeting to tell them where you'll be meeting.

12. Greeting cards

Go to a greeting card store and stock up on birthday cards. Send cards to group members for their birthdays or give the cards to them at the meeting. Purchase a few blank cards so you can write personal words of encouragement. When someone is vulnerable and shares something especially personal in the group, write a quick note after the meeting, thanking that person for what he or she shared, and drop it in the mail the next morning.

Many churches ask small group leaders to complete reports to turn in to the pastor or the church's lay leadership. This helps church leaders know how to support your ministry and help you care for the people in your group. You'll do a better job of completing this report accurately if you discipline yourself to do this right after your group's meeting.

14. A friend

A person isn't really a tool, but it's good for the group when you bring someone new. New people bring life and vitality to your group. Because people are apprehensive about breaking into an established group, inviting someone may not be enough. Go pick up your friend, and use the time in the car to help him or her feel more comfortable.

#3 - 16 Ideas for Places to Meet

Your group might decide to meet in a new location just because it's different-or you might meet somewhere that will help stress a point of a lesson. Consider these alternatives to where you're meeting now.

1. Members' homes

If you regularly meet at your church, meeting in group members' homes can be a welcome change, offering several benefits. Almost any home is warmer than the nicest church meeting room. You can tend to foster more intimacy in a home. Ask someone else to bring refreshments so the host only has to be concerned about getting the house ready. Encourage your host not to feel he or she has to have a perfectly clean home before the group can come.

2. Park it!

Take advantage of nice weather by meeting in a park. Even though you're meeting in a park, think twice before inviting group members to bring their kids. Chances are, you'll lose members several times during the meeting as they go check on their children. If you decide to use a shelter at the park, be sure to follow procedures for scheduling it ahead of time.

3. Coffee, tea, or Bible study?

Meet in a coffee shop for a change of pace. Let group members purchase coffee or snacks, drag some tables together, and go for it. This works especially well if you have a local coffee house owned by a Christian group or church.

4. True combination meal

Go to a casual restaurant for a combo meal-food and Bible study. This might work best if you choose a place like a deli-where everyone orders what they want from a counter and sits together. If the location has a separate room, you may want to reserve it.

5. Study the Book in a store

Most chain bookstores and many local ones have a place where meetings can be held-even if in overstuffed chairs in the middle of the store. Schedule with the store to be sure it's OK to hold your group meeting there. Some Christian bookstores and local libraries also have meeting rooms you can reserve.

6. Local attractions

Does your city have a favorite attraction that might be fun to meet at? It could be man-made, like a special plaza, or natural, like a beach. Or how about the cafe inside a museum? These can offer fun places to meet for a change.

7. Walking on the water

Walk around on the water by using a pontoon boat-or any other boat that will hold your group. Combine a riverboat ride with a journey into Scripture – the Bible is full of meaningful references to water that you can explore.

8. In the middle of commerce

Try meeting in a mall, at the food bar in a grocery store or superstore, or in another shopping area where places are available for just hanging around.

9. Out on the farm

Getting back to nature can be a great place to discuss the themes of reaping, sowing, growth, and harvest.

10. Step into history

Do you have any historic landmarks nearby? Tie in a tour of the historic location with a lesson. Perhaps it's a battle site-prepare a lesson about taking a stand, fighting for what we believe in, or the price of freedom. At a historic home, you could discuss people of the past and the challenges they faced.

11. Amusement park

What about spending a day together at an amusement park? At lunchtime, grab some food and do a brief study that ties into the events of the day.

12. A view of the world

If you live in a larger city, you might want to meet in a skyscraper or gather on a hillside. Your lesson might focus on the temptations of the world.

13. Children's museum

Take time to browse around, and gather for a lesson with a focus of what it means to come to God like a child and to exhibit childlike faith.

14. Holiday sites

Does your city have some special holiday attractions? How can you use these to get away and tie in to the season? And while Christmas might be the most logical holiday to take advantage of this, it's not the only one!

15. Cemetery

A cemetery can be a good object lesson location for many studies. Talk about the brevity of earthly life. Don't let this unusual occasion create a ghoulish meeting, though. You might want to focus on the celebration of life, more than the sorrow of death, or the positive aspect of each person living for a reason and the joy of heritage.

16. Sports arena

How about meeting on the diamond at an empty baseball field? Or on a tennis court that's not being used? Especially great for a lesson on competition!

#4 - 5 Tribe Child Care Solutions

Before long, most tribes face the most challenging issue of what to do about child care. In fact, you may hear potential members say that they can't attend or visit your group because they can't afford or find anyone to care for their children. The good news is you can be proactive and help solve the problem before it starts. Try these ideas...

1. Sink or swim

Perhaps the easiest approach is for your tribe-members to be responsible to make their own child care arrangements. If the group is an important enough value people make the necessary arrangements to ensure that they can attend. However, if you make your child care a group concern, you give your group an early opportunity to practice the value of community.

2. Onsite child care

If you meet in a home or another location that is conducive to this, tribe members can bring children along to your meetings, and parents can pay for on-site care on a child-by-child basis. Of course, it's important to pre-screen any potential child care worker – paid or volunteer- who watches children as part of a church sanctioned activity.

3. Older kids care for younger ones

If some small group members have older children who are mature enough to watch younger children, your group can pay these kids to watch or even put on a lesson for the younger kids during the groups meeting.

4. Piggyback with existing child care

Perhaps your small group could meet at church when child care is already available. Just be careful not to take advantage of volunteers who provide this care. Also, you may need to adjust how long your group meets each week to fit the child-care schedule.

5. Group members rotate

If most or all of your group members have young children, give the members of the group the opportunity to serve each other by rotating the responsibility among the members of the group. Ideally, this would take place on-site where the group is meeting. This way there is no need for another stop to pick up kids, and after the meeting is over – children included – can enjoy some informal fellowship time.

#5 - 12 Ways To Decide What Your Group Will Study

1. Pray

Pray first! Don't begin the process of choosing a study until you first take it before God. Choosing a study is an important decision. It will set the direction of your group for several months. You're not just learning facts; you're studying the true and living Word of God. Lives will be changed. Old habits will be replaced. Relationship will be restored. Years from now, members of your group will remember the study with fondness. Remember, pray first!

2. Remember the purpose of your group

Every small group is different. As your group chooses a study, keep the purpose of the group in mind. Is the purpose evangelism? Then consider an apologetic type study. Is the purpose to find victory over addictions? Then check recommended books and studies listed in literature or on websites of ministries targeting addictions. If your group is part of a church's small group ministry, you'll also want to be faithful to the objectives of the whole ministry and follow direction given by the ministry's leadership.

3. Evaluate the maturity of your group

Bible studies vary from simple to complicated. You want to see growth in the lives of the group members, so what you study needs to be challenging. You also want the Bible studies to be within everyone's grasp, yet you don't want anyone to be bored. Your group might agree to vary the difficulty of studies by starting with a simple study and then following up with a more challenging study. If one or group members find a particular study too difficult, encourage the group to keep them engaged and not become discouraged. You may need to privately remind more mature group members to share your excitement in seeing growth in the lives of those younger in their faith.

4. Evaluate any special circumstances of group members

Are any members of your group going through life circumstances that could give deeper meaning to a particular study? For example, a study on heaven can be especially meaningful when someone has experienced a death in the family. Illness or other difficult times can provide an enriching connection for a study on prayer, the life of Job, God's sovereignty, or staying faithful.

5. Keep the "seasons of life" of group members in mind

Each person is in some season of life-single, married, married with children, empty nest, retired. Consider a study that focuses on the needs unique to a particular season of life being experienced by some of your group members. For example, a study on the family can be valuable for everyone-those who've already raised their children can add wonderful perspective to this kind of study. Similarly, learning about aging is valuable to younger couples with aging parents.

6. Emphasize Reaching Out

If your small group was formed with evangelism in mind, choose a study that's attractive and that honestly addresses the questions that group members are asking. Resist the urge

to use simplistic, answer-it-all studies-these can turn away the very people you're trying to draw in. Even if your group isn't primarily an evangelistic group, you may still have non-Christians attending. Be careful not to choose a study that causes them to feel like targets. Simply choose a more general study, and allow God to work in their hearts as they participate in the discussion with others.

7. Study spiritual disciplines

In the rotation of your studies, include a study of spiritual disciplines. These challenging subjects-such as prayer, scripture reading, fasting, or scripture memorization-will help everyone in your group grow spiritually. Take care to emphasize that spiritual disciplines are tools for growth, not measures of growth.

8. Agree to move beyond Bible knowledge

Studying a book of the Bible together can be a wonderful experience. But always keep in mind that the goal is not just to know more about the Bible. The goal is for the Bible to lead people to know Christ or know him better. Jesus said, "you diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me" (John 5:39).

9. Study Christian Living skills

Choose a study that helps your group develop in a specific area of the Christian life. For example, study evangelism to learn how to evangelize. Study methods of bible study. Work together to find each individual's spiritual gifts. Survey your group to find out the areas of their lives where they'd like to see growth.

10. Study practical living skills from a biblical perspective

The Bible has a lot to say about how we should live each day as we walk with God. From relationships to money to character and values. Scripture is full of guidelines about integrating our faith with everyday life. For example, your group might examine the following topics:

- *Finances.* There are thousands of verses in the Bible related to money
- *Parenting,* "Children are a gift of the Lord" (Psalm 127:3, New American Standard Bible), but they're a gift that seems to come without the instruction manual.
- *Marriage.* Once we get married, how do we spend the rest of our lives learning how to live together?

11. Tackle Contemporary Issues

What are the latest headlines? Consider studies that help group members think wisely about issues that are in the media every day. Of course studying a subject like genetics, gender roles, or origin of life can also be risky or divisive. Don't necessarily avoid these topics; just choose study material wisely.

12. Study relationship building

One of the best ways to for your group to learn how to be a community is to study the "one anothers" of Scripture, encouraging each other to live out these important principles. Remember, you're a group of "one anothers."

#6 - 7 Roles to Get Group Members More Involved

One way to solve problems and increase how connected people in your group feel to each other is by giving members an area of ministry that they can own. Not everyone in your group will want to take on a responsibility, but others will welcome the opportunity. As you think of ways to encourage positive involvement in the life of the group, keep these ministry positions in mind.

1. Prayer ministry coordinator

Recruit someone who is passionate about prayer to be the keeper of the prayer list, as well as the spark plug for letting your group know about urgent prayer needs that arise between group meetings.

2. Meeting host

As the leader of your group, you may also end up serving as the meeting host. But a way to involve others is recruiting someone else to host the meeting.

3. Food coordinator

While this seems like a relatively minor detail, meeting refreshments can become a major distraction for you to keep up with. Chances are, at least one person in your group would love to take this responsibility off your shoulders, and that person will be uniquely gifted to handle this duty with grace.

4. Child-care coordinator

Because child care can be a big issue for your group, let someone with the contacts, know-how, and a heart for kids help address this vital issue.

5. "Inreach" coordinator

Over the course of your group's time together, specific needs inevitably will arise within the group. For example, someone could get sick and need meals, or the group may want to send a card of encouragement. An "inreach" coordinator takes charge of many details, such as picking up birthday and get well cards that the group can send and arranging for meals.

6. Outreach coordinator

Some people have a way of connecting with newcomers. A healthy, open group should desire to see others join and experience Christian community. While everyone in the group is encouraged to reach out to others, let this person take the lead in promoting the group and making visitors feel welcome.

7. Subgroup Leader(s)

Depending on the size of your group, you may find it very helpful and practical to break into smaller groups at various points in a meeting. This is a great opportunity to let leaders lead and to help develop future leaders.

#7 - 8 Do's and Don'ts For Your First Meeting

The launch of your tribe is an exciting event. You're taking a diverse group of individuals and forming them into a community. The people come from different backgrounds and families, have different likes and dislikes, span a range of ages, and possess different spiritual maturities. Some may be skeptical, others may be shy. Chances are someone may be a bit overbearing. Your goal is to create an atmosphere that allows people to blend comfortably and not feel threatened. You want to give hope for the future. With all of that in mind, consider a few ground rules for how you will lead the group's first meeting.

1. Don't begin with preconceived expectations.

It takes time for people to trust you and each other. So while you want to do the best job you can to lead and facilitate, avoid settling unrealistic expectations. Take what you get and build from there.

2. Don't allow people to feel pressured.

Give people the freedom to participate as they feel comfortable. Be careful not to put someone on the spot.

3. Don't ask people to read aloud until you know they are comfortable doing so.

Keep in mind that some people have reading disabilities. The last thing you want to do is embarrass someone.

4. Don't assume everyone will want to pray aloud.

Encourage individuals to pray if they want to, and then you can close. For many people it takes time before they feel comfortable praying in front of others.

5. Don't ask people to give spontaneous "testimonies."

In addition to some people being shy, others in your group may not be Christians or know what a testimony is! (In fact, it's best to avoid using church lingo.)

6. Do ask people to let you know if they feel uncomfortable praying or reading aloud.

It will be such a relief for people to be able to let you know that they don't like to read or pray in public. You can also let them know they can change their minds if they begin to feel more comfortable with other group members.

7. Do ask people ahead of time if they are willing to share their faith stories.

By lining up people ahead of time, you'll get a good sense of who feels comfortable sharing and who doesn't. This also gives people time to prepare what they want to say – and lessens the chance they'll ramble on and on.

8. Do ask for volunteers to read Scripture.

Simply asking, “Would someone like to ready verses 28 and 29?” gives people a chance to read aloud if they want to. If no one volunteers for a few seconds, say “Ok, I’ll go ahead and read that passage.”

#8 - 13 Practical Ways to Make Every Meeting Count

Often, the practical things you do to prepare for the meetings of your tribe are just as important as making sure you're in the right place spiritually. Make the most of your tribe meetings with these practical ideas.

1. Even though you could probably lead your study with minimal preparation time, take time to preview the lesson during the week. Highlight questions you feel are important for your tribe to spend time on, and make note of any supplies you might need.
2. Before your tribe is scheduled to meet, make sure the environment is ready. Is the temperature comfortable? Do you have enough chairs? Are the chairs arranged so that no one is feeling outside the group? How is the lighting? Do you have all the supplies you need? What about refreshments? Is the bathroom presentable and is there toilet paper? Details like these are important components of a great meeting.
3. Prior to the start of the meeting, make every effort to personally welcome and greet each person as he/she arrives.
4. Have refreshments available at the start of the meeting. Build ten or fifteen minutes of snack time before officially starting. This way of people are running a bit late, they won't miss the beginning of the session.
5. Do what you can to avoid interruptions during the meeting time. If practical, don't answer the phone. Also, at the start of the phone politely ask people to turn off or down cell phones.
6. Always start on time! IF you do this faithfully from the first meeting, you'll avoid the group arriving and starting later and later each week.
7. Don't hesitate to divide into smaller groups for discussion and prayer. This can encourage greater participation by everyone in the group and starts to develop leadership in others.
8. Encourage everyone to participate, but be careful not to put people on the spot. Let the group know upfront that they can pass on questions that they are not comfortable answering.
9. Keep your group on track. Encourage good discussion, but don't be afraid or timid about calling time on a given question and moving on. Part of your job is clock management. If the group decides to spend extra time on a particular question or activity, consider skipping or spend less time on another question or activity in order to stay on schedule.

10. Before dismissing the group, always a good idea to confirm the time and place for your next gathering. Also make sure that whoever is responsible for refreshments at the next meeting is aware of his/her responsibility.
11. End on time. Regardless of where you are in the lesson, when the clock rolls around to the “advertised” ending time, give people the opportunity to leave if they need to. Then wrap up as quickly as you can. This communicates that you value and respect people’s time.
12. Be prepared for people who want to hang out and talk after the meeting. If for any reason you (or the host) need people to leave by a certain time, be sure to make this clear during the meeting.
13. Thank people for coming, and let them know that you look forward to seeing them again at the next meeting.

#9 - 7 Specific Personality Dynamics and Ways to Deal with Them

1. The uncontrollable talker

- Ask questions this way: "In two or three sentences, how would you describe. . . "
- Ask specific people to answer your questions. This gives other people permission to contribute.
- Sit next to the talker. Eye contact is a permission-giving signal. When you sit next to someone, eye contact is very difficult.
- Interrupt. Even talkers have to breathe. Wait for a deep breath, jump in, and redirect the question to the rest of the group. Say, "That's a good point. Sally, how do you see this passage applying to your life?"
- Talk with the person privately. Ask him or her to help you get others involved, using the talker's boldness to your advantage.
- Develop a "stop" signal. In your private conversation come up with a signal-like pulling your ear so that the talker will recognize when he or she goes too far.

2. The rabbit-chasing group

- Interrupt someone who seems to be changing the subject from the main point of the lesson by reminding the whole group of the goal. Then redirect the question to someone else.
- Depend on your intern or apprentice. This person can support you during the meeting by bringing the group back to the main point.
- State the goal of the discussion upfront. If your group has problems with staying on track, this may be a crucial strategy.
- Pray. If someone shares a personal need during the discussion and you feel that it's inappropriate at that point in your lesson, say something like, "Thank you for sharing. May I pray for you right now?" Pray briefly and then get back on track.

3. A person with chronic needs

- Pray for the person after the meeting is over. This is especially important if this person shares his or her needs every week.
- Spend time together outside the group meeting.
- Ask another group member to spend some time with that person.
- Ask the help of a pastor or a coach.

4. A disruptive or argumentative visitor

- Explain the purpose of your group. This is especially important if the visitor is from another church and has a lot of small group experience. He or she may want

to force a different agenda on the group, and you must make it clear that you won't let this happen.

- Direct questions to specific people so that the disruptive visitor doesn't have permission to take over.
- Keep the conversation going. Silence gives this person an open door to make his or her point.
- Interrupt. This is crucial when someone is giving harmful advice to other group members or saying something that's biblically unsound.

5. Group member conflict

- Help people understand that conflict is a natural part of relating to others. Groups that never experience conflict are failing to honestly relate to one another. If group members are growing in relationships, they're bound to have misunderstandings and hurt feelings.
- Mediate. Help people talk through their differences and misunderstandings.
- Practice forgiveness. You'll experience conflict yourself. You must model a healthy conflict by forgiving anyone who hurts you.

6. A stagnant group

- Invite new people. Challenge members to invite new people.
- Meet at a different time or place.
- Go on a daylong retreat and ask God for a vision for your group. If you don't have a vision, it will be almost impossible for the group to change.
- Take a break from the "usual" and do something different and fun.

7. An enormous group

- Identify a future leader and mentor that person. Without another leader, your group will be stuck. It will never multiply no matter how big it gets.
- Prepare the group for "multiplication." Explain to your group that multiplication is a future possibility. Do this two or three months before you actually "birth" or start a new group.
- Break your group into smaller groups to discuss the lesson.

#10 - 40 Questions to Help You Stay Spiritually Focused

God has given you the opportunity and privilege of serving him as you serve as the leader of a small group. In so doing, you follow in the path of Jesus himself, who maintained different levels of relationships in his earthly ministry. In your service as a small group leader who follows in the Master's footsteps, keep in mind that your standard must be his standard, one well reflected in the Apostle Paul's words: "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men" (Colossians 3:23). Use the following questions to prepare your own heart spiritually and to help you focus on the essentials as you lead your small group.

1. Before God, how am I doing personally?
2. Am I praying for myself?
3. How's my walk with God? Am I up to date with him?
4. Does Christ live in me?
5. Is he giving me victory?
6. Do I know that God's call and hand are upon me to serve him as a small group leader?
7. Am I personally prepared to lead?
8. Does my life, in increasing measure, reflect the characteristics of leaders based on 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9?
9. Is there a need, for any reason, to "take myself out of the game" so I can get right with God?
10. Am I prayerfully considering the lesson, asking God to lead through it in light of what he knows about each member of the group and their needs?
11. To what extent am I seeking to understand members' needs and adapting the lesson to address their needs?
12. Do I know where group members are in their faith, and is there a particular book study or series that God can use in their lives?
13. Does my preparation reflect that I am committed to looking at what the Bible says, what it means, and what it means to each of us?
14. Am I preparing in such a way that members will be able to talk, mull over the Bible, and move toward personal application?
15. Am I developing a support team—an apprentice leader, a host, a mentor/coach, or am I attempting to be a "lone ranger leader"?
16. Am I creating an environment where the "one another/each other" verses of the Bible can be lived out?
17. Are group members demonstrating in word and deed commitment to each other—exhorting, encouraging, and praying for each other?
18. Are group members looking at God's Word (rather than a myriad of other sources of "understanding this world") and applying it to their lives?

19. Am I preaching or facilitating a discussion? As I guide the group through the lesson, is it a conversation? Do I give everyone the opportunity to speak?
20. Am I comfortable with silence as people mull over the personal implications of God's Word?
21. Am I more apt to be the "Bible answer person" or to ask, "What's the group's take on this"?
22. Do our group's studies move toward application? Am I asking, "In light of this lesson, what do you think God is trying to teach you?"
23. Am I teaching tradition or biases, or are we comparing Scripture with Scripture to get the fullest, most accurate meaning from a verse or passage?
24. Am I being sensitive to the Holy Spirit's leading?
25. Is one person dominating the discussion?
26. Do members have an opportunity to talk honestly, without "masks," about what's going on-their joys and struggles, hopes and fears, the best and worst moments of the week-especially in light of biblical truth and in time set aside for prayer?
27. Are group members sharing distant or surface prayer requests, or are the prayer needs personal and deep?
28. Am I sensitive enough to the Spirit's lead that I know when to scrap the lesson and devote the entire time to prayer?
29. Are we as a group keeping a record of how God answers prayer, and are we occasionally reviewing together how God is answering the group prayers?
30. Are members talking about praise reports as well, sharing with fellow members what God has done and is doing?
31. Is there a sense of authentic worship from start to finish?
32. After each meeting, do I ponder what really hit home with group members in terms of the lesson?
33. How can I help each group member grow toward greater Christlikeness and biblical obedience?
34. Did each member of the group have a chance to share concerns and requests?
35. Is God meeting me at my point of need? Did I learn something new, relevant, and applicable right along with the group?
36. Is my small group keeping faith with its covenant-for example, not merely "inward focused" (helping members grow in Christ) but "outward focused" (open to unchurched family members, friends, and neighbors)?
37. Am I regularly praying for each member of my group and the needs each brought up during the prayer time?
38. Am I reflecting God's love to each member of the group between meetings?
39. Am I calling, e-mailing, putting a card of encouragement in the mail, or touching base in person with each member regularly?
40. To what extent am I demonstrating a commitment to helping members find meaningful ministry not only inside but also outside the group?

#11 - 18 Fun Small Group Activities

"Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy" (Psalm 126:2). Sounds like their small group activity was a success! With a little planning and a lot of imagination, your team can pull off a great time of fun, too. There's something about simply getting a bit crazy that bonds people like nothing else can. Most of these activities cost less than five dollars per person, and many are absolutely free. Peter said we were set aside as a peculiar people (1 Peter 2:9, King James Version). Loosely translated, that means going bananas every once in a while is biblical, so let's party!

1. Karaoke or really bad stand-up comedy night

Choose an emcee, have each person perform to the worst of their ability. The audience can hold up numbered index cards to rate performances. Booing and heckling are encouraged.

2. Mystery Trip

Where are you headed? Only your driver and tour guide know for sure. Leaders may give clues at their discretion, like "wear walking shoes" or "bring your swimsuit." You might head for a common local attraction or go sightseeing at a more remote location. Let members know the time frame ("We'll be back in 2 hours" or we'll be gone overnight"), but otherwise keep them in the dark as long as possible!

3. Gifts and hobbies

It is time to honor the gifts and strengths of individual group members. Have all group members bring items that represent their favorite hobbies. After each group member shares his or her creative piece and tells why this particular activity is special, clap and thank God for the unique talents he's given that person.

4. Song burst

Whether you're soprano, bass or alto, or tenor – or simply A (always) flat – this activity will have your group bursting out laughing. Pick a theme like "animals." As you go around the room, each person must sing a line of a song that relates to the theme, like "Old McDonald had a pig" or "How much is that doggie in the window?" Anyone who falters has to drop out. Keep going until only one person is left who can think of a song related to the theme. If the remaining person can sing one more line, you've got a winner!

5. Digital scavenger hunt

Divide group members into teams, then pass out lists of things to find within a designated area (such as your neighborhood, town or within a 10 mile radius). As group members locate each item, they snap a digital photo of themselves with the item. (The goofier the pose, the better, of course!) Set a time for all the teams to meet back at the starting point, then compare pictures to see which team came closest to completing the list.

6. Adult slumber parties

Remember how much fun it was to lounge around in your pajamas, watching movies and giggling and sharing secrets with your pals? Even though you're all grown up, it can still be as much fun. Don't assume slumber parties are just for gals. Guys like this sort of thing too, so set them up with their own slumber party in a neighboring house, or they could tent in the backyard.

7. Why and because

Pass out two pieces of scrap paper and a pencil to group members, asking them to write a why question on one piece and a "because" answer on the other. (For example, "Why does Bill wear glasses?" and "Because he can't see without them.") Put the "why" questions in one basket and the "because" answers in another basket. Mix up the papers in two separate baskets, then pull out a question and read it to the group. Have someone else choose a paper from the "because" basket and see how silly the answers turn out to be.

8. Three dollars and thirty three cents party

Gather \$3.33 from each person attending, and pool all the money into a party pot. Once you know how much the group has to work with have everyone brainstorm ways the money can be used for something fun to do that evening. Maybe get some pizza, rent a movie, buy a board game, or purchase a kite to fly. Kick your imaginations into high gear.

9. Round robin carwash

Park group members' cars in a circle in a large parking lot with access to water. Have couples wash and detail another family's car. Make this a labor of love as each couple tries to outdo the others. The bonus is that all the cars end up sparkling clean, inside and out. And if the water fight breaks out, that's fun too!

10. Progressive Dinner

Progressive dinners work especially well with larger groups, say a dozen people or more. Have four volunteers offer their homes as stops on your tantalizing tour.

Split the party menu into appetizers, salads, entrees, and desserts; decide which house will feature each course; then assign people to bring various dishes. Carpool and plan on spending thirty to forty minutes at each location.

11. Stargazing and Praising

There's no better time to spot the heavens declaring glory of god than on a clear night, with stars sparkling and planets twirling overhead. Choose your stargazing date, then visit internet sites star date online (www.stardate.org) to make a list of stars and planets visible to the naked eye in your part of the world that evening. Choose a dark field away from city lights, spread out blankets, and have people lie on their backs for a panoramic view of the sky above. Use your list to identify celestial points, and then end your stargazing with praise songs and Scripture reading. Check references to the word heavens in a Bible concordance.

12. Build –a- sundae ice cream social

To keep the line moving, have a couple of servers dish up ice cream, then direct group members to another table to add their toppings. Ask each group member to bring their favorite topping. The key to a great sundae is keeping the main ingredient nice and cold so don't bring out until you're ready to start.

13. Pizza pizazz

Mix up pizza dough prior to the party (or buy premixed frozen), and throw some Italian opera music on. Have group members roll out and shape their individually sized pizza crust, ladle the sauce and add toppings. Bake and voila! Private homes can usually handle pizza making groups of eight or less. Larger groups might opt for using a larger kitchen and ovens at the church.

14. Games night

Games night is an activity that screams "the more the merrier." To begin, have everyone count off in threes (ones head for the first room, twos head for the second room and threes to the third). Ring the bell and group members start playing whichever game is in their particular room. After forty-five minutes, switch again. Encourage group members to interact with different people each time. This can also be done outside playing outdoor games like basketball, volleyball and Frisbee golf.

15. Year round caroling

Who says caroling is just for Christmas? Gather your group and song sheets of hymens or praise songs, and head of the nearest street corner to entertain passing pedestrians. Or surprise your pastor with an impromptu concert on his front lawn.

Or perk up a friend who had a rough week. Afterward, meet at one of the carolers' homes for cider, cookies and fellowship.

16. Seventies teen idol flashbacks

It's time to drag out those old Partridge Family and Donny Osmond posters. Turn on strobe lights, black lights, lava lamps; slap some Jackson Five or Bee Gees on; and have your partiers sport fringe, love beads and polyester. Don't forget the happy faces...Groovy man!

17. What I like about you

Pass out scraps of paper and pencils to group members. Ask them to write the name of each group member on a separate piece of paper, followed by something they like about that person. Encourage people to write something nice, even if they don't know the person they are writing about very well. (First impressions are still important!) When everyone finishes writing, gather slips in basket, then pull the papers out one by one, reading the name and complimentary comment. After reading a paper, pass it to the person who was praise so they can keep it.

18. Story in the round

The first person begins a story in the round with one sentence that includes a noun or verb that starts with the letter "a." For example, "I was walking through the *apple* orchard the other day when I looked and saw something that surprised me." The second person continues the story with a sentence that continues the story with the letter "b." Continue around the circle until you end the story with a sentence containing a word beginning with "z."

#12 - 7 Basic ways to Deal with Problems in Your Group

Because your group is made up of human beings, you can't avoid problems. In fact, you don't want to avoid them. Problems give God an opportunity to deal with issues that keep your group from growing and moving on. They reveal hidden issues of people's hearts that limit them and keep them bound up, without spiritual freedom. Good leaders know how to deal with problems. Satan will seek to exploit disagreements and conflicts for his gain, but the Lord desires to go with hearts and use problems to sharpen his people. *"As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another: (Proverbs 27:17).*

1. Pray

When you recognize a problem, your natural instinct is to react, to take action. You think, "I need to confront him," or "I need to tell her what to do." You might come to these conclusions because you took same approach in the past and it worked. Don't depend on past experience. God wants you to seek him for the other person and allow him room to work. You might sense that God wants you to act. But you might also realize that you need to wait.

2. Look to Scripture

When it comes to dealing with problems in your group, search the scriptures to see what God's Word has to say about the situation. For example, in regard to interpersonal conflict that might arise in a group, there are numerous Bible passages that provide a biblical basis for conflict resolution. (Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 7:5,12; 18:15-17; Ephesians 4:2-3, 25, 29, 32; Philippians 2:3-4.

3. Develop a core

If you feel the pressure to deal with problems yourself, it might be a sign that you've taken all of the group's leadership on your own shoulders. A wiser approach is to invite two or three group members to work with you. These core members can help you pray for the group, provide feedback, and even deal with some of the administrative issues of leading a group.

4. Identify an apprentice or intern

Pray that God will rise up a future leader you can mentor into a leadership role. This person will be a part of the group core, but he or she would take on the additional responsibility of helping you lead meetings and care for group members. This means that you always have support from at least one person as you deal with problems.

5. Take charge

Failing to do what you need to do-perhaps because you fear offending the source of the problem-is one of the worst things you can do. When you attain a clear sense of God's direction, you should do one thing: Obey. You also may face situations that require immediate action, such as when someone speaks against the leadership of the church,

tries to spread false doctrine, or tries to give a group member bad advice. In these kinds of situations, people can get hurt, so you must act. Be the leader you are.

6. Talk with your pastor or small groups coach

Some problems you encounter will be beyond your ability or experience to address. It's a sign of maturity when you realize that you don't know what to do. Talk with the person who oversees you and your group.

7. Refer

If someone shares a chronic or potentially harmful problem-such as a troubled marriage, chronic depression, suicidal thoughts, sexual sins, or abuse-refer that group member to a pastor. Even better, go along to set up an appointment with the pastor and tell that group member that you can accompany him or her to the meeting if desired.

#13 - 11 Steps to Take When You Know it's Time to Go

If God seems to be confirming that it's time to pursue an appropriate ending for your group, commit to do so in such a way that glorifies God and affirms others. The following considerations will help you to do this.

1. Talk to your church leaders

Inform them about how God is leading you, ask for their advice and put it into practice.

2. Let your small group know

Of course, you need to seek an appropriate time to do this, at least several weeks before you're leaving. Be prepared to allow time for group members to process the implications of having new leaders.

3. Ask the group to help you "go out with a bang"

Call a special meeting to plan what that might look like. Have a party or cookout or potluck. If the group is becoming two or more groups, you might have a launching celebration instead of an ending party.

4. Have an "end of the group" prayer meeting

Thank God for what he's done through the small group, what he continues to do in the life of each member, and his commitment to use each one in his service.

5. Provide assurances

Let group members know that you'll never stop being committed to their success!

6. Conduct a wrap-up session

Spend the final meeting of your group evaluating how the group has grown. Also discuss what worked and what didn't - even what you need to remember when saying yes to small group leadership in the future.

7. Keep praying for one another

Prayer is a habit you've practiced week after week, and you have special insight into the needs of your group because you've walked with them for some time. So keep things going. Commit to pray for everyone in the group, perhaps one day a week. If you don't have specific prayer requests, perhaps that's your cue to contact them.

8. Keep in touch with one another

There are many quick ways to do this. Send an e-mail update and ask what's going on in their worlds. Invite group members to have coffee or a meal from

time to time. How about going to an event together, such as a Christian concert or sports event?

9. Get together three or four times a year

It doesn't have to be anything special. Establish a tradition of watching the Super Bowl together, gather for a Canada Day barbecue and fireworks show, play board games by the fire in the fall, or hold a Christmas open house and carol sing.

10. Hold an annual reunion

Invite everyone who has ever attended your small group to come together once again to touch base. Of course, have a meal together and give people time to visit informally. But then come together and go around the room to give people an opportunity to update the group with what's going on in their lives. Questions to get you going include "What are you most excited about these days?" "What's your biggest challenge?" "Can you take a few minutes to update us on some of the prayer requests we prayed for when we met regularly?"

11. Let group members know you're available

If you're willing to do this, be available for group members should the need arise. Your commitment doesn't stop at the door of the group's last meeting! Communicate that your door is always open.

#14 - 13 Approaches to Group Prayer

As you lead your group, the concept of modeling prayer is very important, especially if your group is meeting for the first time. One of the ways adults who are in an ongoing group can experience Prayer is by the leader introducing different ways to pray over the course of the study. Use these ideas to get you started.

1. Leader prayer

For a first meeting where people may not know each other well, take prayer requests and then, as the leader, offer a closing prayer. To solicit prayer requests, ask the question, "How can our group pray for you this week?"

2. Volunteer prayer

You can learn who is comfortable praying aloud by asking for volunteers. In your second meeting, ask, "Who would like to close in prayer for us tonight?" Take prayer requests and have your volunteers pray.

3. Group prayers

Divide the larger group into pairs or groups of three or four. The people in these smaller groups can focus on praying for each other.

4. Sentence prayers

Another way to pray in a group is to have everyone complete short, simple sentence prayers. For example, ask everyone to complete one of the following sentences: "Lord, I want to thank you for. . . ." or "Lord, I want to pray for..."

5. Silent prayer

Don't overlook the power of silent prayer. There's something moving about a room full of individuals all pouring out their hearts to God at the same time.

6. Assisted silent prayer

Read each prayer request aloud and pause briefly (for ten seconds) after each one to allow the group to pray before moving on to the next item.

7. Prayer Circle

Form a prayer circle with hands joined, and ask each person to take a turn praying. Make it clear that silent prayer is an option. A person who prays silently can squeeze the hand of the next person to indicate that he or she has finished praying.

8. Pray Scripture

Pray the Lord's Prayer or read a psalm. This can be done together or by breaking up the Passage into parts. This is a form of scripted prayer that will make praying aloud easier for some.

9. Open prayer

Anyone can offer up a prayer or prayers. When doing this, it can be helpful to designate a person to open and a person to close the prayer time. Don't rush and don't be put off by some short periods of silence.

10. Domino prayer

Ask everyone to "Pray for the Person to your left or right – silently or aloud." If someone chooses to pray silently, ask him or her to say "Amen" at the end of the prayer to indicate he or she has finished praying.

11. Musical prayer

Sing a common chorus or hymn, such as the Doxology.

12. Planned prayer

Read a prayer from a book of prayers.

13. Ending Prayer

Make a final session or a meeting's prayer time special by asking the group to stand together in a circle. Each group member can take a turn standing or, if comfortable, kneeling in the center of the group as the group prays specifically for him or her.

#15 - 3 Ways to Gauge if it's Time to End your Group

If you're thinking that it may be time to end your tribe, make sure you're listening to the right voice. Is it exhaustion? Is it frustration? Is it truly God's direction? How can you know for sure?

1. Pray for wisdom

“If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him” (James 1:5).

2. Yield your heart

“Therefore I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God - this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good pleasing and perfect will” (Romans 12:1-2).

3. Ask, seek and knock

“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened” (Matthew 7:7-8).