



STARTING OFF RIGHT:

BEGINNING A NEW SEASON WITH A SMALL GROUP

How you start a small group sets a trajectory for the time the group is together. Not just when the group first begins (although this is also critical), but in every new season when a group regathers, it's important to reset expectations, boundaries, goals, hopes, priorities, etc. This is important for new groups and groups that have been together for years. The idea is that "Clarity brings freedom." When a group is clear on expectations, hopes, goals, it actually allows people to relax into the group more. Often, it's when people in the group have wildly different unspoken expectations (on commitment levels, vulnerability of sharing, etc.) that tension and conflict can arise.

Here are some important questions to talk about at the beginning of the year with your small group, in hopes that this clarity brings freedom to you and your group members:

FOR NEWLY FORMED GROUPS IT'S IMPORTANT TO TALK ABOUT:

- Expectations around confidentiality. Do we want to be a group where what is shared here stays here? (The answer should be yes!)
- Hopes that everyone will have a chance to be heard. Have you ever been part of a group where some people dominated the conversation or some people never spoke up? (Let's strive for equal sharing.)
- How we want to respond when people share. If you share something vulnerable or perhaps controversial, how do you hope others respond to you? (We don't judge, criticize, or give advice. Listen first!)

FOR ALL GROUPS IT'S IMPORTANT TO TALK ABOUT PRACTICAL STUFF:

- Touch base on starting and ending times, meeting location and frequency, and plans for childcare/involving kids (if applicable).
- Touch base on how long a commitment people are making. We want to let people step out to try other groups around September and January.
- Expectations around commitment levels. Do we want this to be a group you can drop in and out of or one where we all make a real commitment to be here every week?
- If someone isn't able to make it, what's expected as far as communication? Is it okay with us that people just don't make it or do we want them to contact the leader ahead of time?
- Expectations around inviting others. Can anyone in the group invite others anytime they want? Do we touch base with the leader first?

FOR ALL GROUPS IT'S IMPORTANT TO TALK ABOUT HEART STUFF:

- What are our hopes for this group in this season?
- Do we have specific things you hope we do together as a group?
- How do we hope to engage with God as a group this season?
- What are our hopes for the relationships in the group this season?
- How do we hope this group serves together, or is on mission this season?