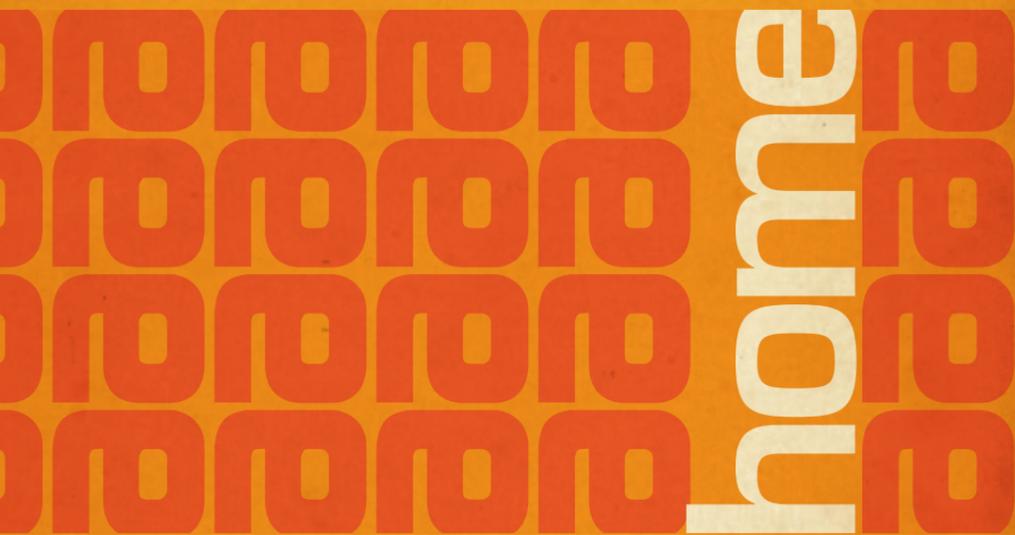


A JOURNEY
home

SMALL GROUP/
HOST TIPS



Hello there, host.

Thanks for stepping up to host a small group! (Bonus points.)

In a nutshell: small groups are core to each person's Journey Home experience—they're groups for people to encourage and challenge each other, and to share these next six weeks in community. As a host, you'll not only get a chance to be around other people as they grow, but you'll have the chance to grow significantly yourself.

We believe that God will use the Journey Home to teach us a lot about who we are, and bring us closer to him through the combination of weekend teaching, weekly challenges and small group community. As your small group's host, you are key in all this.

In this booklet are host responsibilities, week-by-week prep, and tips on how to host your group—like keeping conversation afloat, handling conflict and beefing up the level of camaraderie. Sweet.

What is a host?

Being a host means that you welcome a group of people into your home—or another suitable spot—for six weeks. You don't need to have all the answers, and we don't expect you to be a Bible expert or therapist. Just be friendly, inclusive, a quiet leader and a good role model.

HOST RESPONSIBILITIES BEFORE THE JOURNEY STARTS:

1. Register as a host. Since you're reading these materials, you've probably already registered as a host at **makethejourneyhome.com**. But if you haven't registered online, please do. That's how we'll keep you in the loop, and send out last-minute instructions.

2. Form your small group. If you already have a group, great! Consider expanding it to add some new friends, neighbors or coworkers—because we like to bring others into the

fold. If you're forming a new group, you can go to makethejourneyhome.com to post your group. Then others can find you online and contact you via email.

3. Contact your group. As soon as you can, contact everyone in your group to confirm a meeting time and location. **And tell everyone to bring their Journey Guide with them. This is super duper important.** (They'll get their guides the first weekend of the journey, on October 6-7.)

HOST RESPONSIBILITIES ONCE THE JOURNEY STARTS:

1. Help set the ground rules. At your first small group meeting, you'll be reading a few ground rules from the group materials. This is also a good time to add whatever is relevant for your group, like group childcare, conflicting schedules or White Castle cravings.

2. Be a timekeeper. Make sure your group is starting and ending at the agreed upon time (unless everyone in your group is footloose and fancy free).

3. Bring everyone into the conversation.

You don't have to be Bob Costas to ask questions and get people talking. If you notice someone's being really quiet, ask for their input. If you notice someone hogging the floor, when they finally take a breather—gently interrupt and say, "Oh, it looks like we've got a few more things to talk about... do you mind if we move on?" Bam.

4. Make it safe. Your small group should be a safe and comfortable place for people,

wherever they are on their spiritual journey. Be sure to respect any and all questions. Some people might uncover experiences in their past that elicit emotion, even strong emotions. People probably don't want to be "fixed" or given advice. Listen in an understanding way and affirm them for their discovery.

5. Feel free to pray for your group's time together at the beginning of your meetings.

Remember that it's likely that people in your group will be in very different places on their spiritual journeys, and will have varying levels of

comfort and experience with prayer. Don't feel obligated, but if you do decide to pray, keep it simple, short and sweet. Maybe something like this:

God, thanks for this time together. Please give us the energy to make the most of this Journey Home, and open our hearts to the power and the love that comes from you. We want whatever you have for us. Amen.

AND DID WE MENTION HAVE FUN? HAVE SOME.

Week-by-week prep

Because you're the host, we'll let you in on a couple secrets. But don't go spilling the beans, and **DO NOT** open the Journey Home Small Group Experience box before your first meeting. Surprises are more fun.

WEEK ONE

Let the “square” (the tear-off pad inside your box) be what facilitates your group discussion. All directions and explanations are inside the materials—so no need to plan a speech or get sweaty palms. All you have to do is open the box, tear off the first sheet of the square pad and start reading.

WEEK TWO

No insider tips, but it's still a special week. And feel free to send a quick email encouragement to remind everyone to do their weekly challenge.

WEEK THREE

Have a cup of water handy.

WEEK FOUR

Have a Bible handy. (You'll never guess...)

WEEK FIVE

1. Make sure you have a way to play a DVD.

(The DVD is in your box.)

2. The group materials will give the instructions, but your group will be planning a potluck for the last meeting. So make sure everyone is pitching in for the meal and that you allow yourselves some extra time for the grubbing.

WEEK SIX

During this last week, the materials will ask your group to decide if the group wants to keep getting together. No pressure to host whatever comes next, but staying connected with people who know what's going on in your life is really helpful in our spiritual journeys. It's perfectly OK if not everyone in your group can (or wants to) commit to remaining in the group, so no one is under any obligation. But really consider continuing to meet on a regular basis—we have more materials to help your group keep it going.

What if?

What if someone consistently breaks the small group ground rules?

Your first step should be to talk one-on-one with the person, away from the rest of the group. Remind them of the ground rules and how they can help you keep the group a positive experience for everyone. Focus your discussion on the “event” that happened.

If that doesn't work, sit down with the person and someone else from the group. If no meaningful changes occur after taking these steps, it would be appropriate to ask the person to step out of the group. This plan follows the guidance given in the Bible in Matthew 18:15-17.

What if there's conflict within the group? What if a discussion turns into an argument?

Arm wrestle.

Seriously, there's a healthy principle that says, “What happens in the group needs to be resolved in the group.” As host, your role is to remind everyone that the group needs to be a place that allows healthy disagreement, but not at the expense of respect for one another. This is a great opportunity to look at what the Bible has to say about disagreements. Have the group turn in their Bibles to Ephesians 4:15 to read about “speaking the truth in love,” and to Ephesians 4:32 to read about “forgiving each other.”

What if someone consistently dominates the conversation and there isn't room for others to talk?

This usually happens, and sometimes the chatty person is super-nice, so you hate to say

anything. But it will help. (Even as host, you might be tempted to carry a lot of the conversation. It's better to let everyone take equal part. Go for the “start-and-hand-off” approach.)

Consider following up with the chatty guy outside the group time. Ask him to be intentional about holding back, so less-vocal members can participate more easily. If it happens again, step in diplomatically and say something like, “Dave, we've heard from you on this, but let's hear from others in the group who haven't had a chance to share...”

What if someone in the group experiences a crisis?

This is what community is about. It's not all fun and salty snacks. It's being there for someone when they're hurting. Your first step is to see if there's a way that the group as a whole can be of help. For instance, if the person is in the

hospital, you could call the other members to see if they can visit on different days, or split up help in a way that one person is not responsible for everything.

What if I have kids and don't know what to do with them while my group meets?

Your group experience will include serious discussion, prayer and some surprises. And it will almost certainly be boring for young kids. Parents are encouraged to investigate babysitting options (some groups even share a sitter). Every situation is different, so talk it over with your group and decide what's best for everyone.

SMALL GROUP/GROUND RULES

1: Be great listeners.

2: Instead of giving advice,
give an example from your own life that relates.

3: Keep it confidential.
Whatever is said in the group, stays in the group.

4: Commit to being at every weekend service
for six weeks, coming to every small group meeting,
and doing your weekly challenges.

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