

6 Ways to Excel as a Small Group Leader

1. Great Small Group leaders pray for group members daily.

When you're leading your Small Group, keep a prayer journal (or any discreet way of recording information—iPad, smartphone, memo pad, notebook, etc.) near you. As prayer requests, praises, or concerns arise, jot them down. Pray for these items throughout the week, and when you think of it, text or email those you're praying for so that they remember how much you care.

There's no need to share these requests with anyone outside of Small Group. Earn trust and build confidence by keeping things relatively private, that is, between you, your group, and God. The exception: If non-private needs arise—pregnancies, deaths, moves, or any other significant life changes—consider inviting other Small Groups from your church to participate in care-giving activities like taking them a meal, offering free babysitting, or helping to pack or unpack. *Always* be on a lookout for ways to bless and encourage those in your group. Keep in mind, a great Small Group leader views prayer as a non-negotiable aid in their ministry to others. They build it into their daily schedules and make it a priority.

Great Small Group leaders contact group members regularly.

If someone misses Small Group for a week or two, it may be second nature to reach out, asking how they're doing and feeling. It may not be second nature, however, to reach out to those who are doing well or haven't shared a prayer request in weeks. They need your encouragement just as much as everyone else.

Here are a few things you can do to bless them this week.

- Shoot them a text
- Leave a short message on their Facebook/Instagram wall
- Mail a greeting card

Great Small Group leaders are prepared for the group meeting.

How do you prepare? It could be cleaning the house, going grocery shopping (having snacks and coffee on hand is a Small Group must), listening to a podcast of the previous Sunday's service, reading through assigned Scripture passages, arranging child care, or spending time in prayer. No doubt there's a checklist you go through each week so that you don't miss anything.

Here are a few intangible things to consider as you prepare to lead your group this week.

- Don't do all the talking. The best leaders facilitate conversations rather than dispensing information. They strive to facilitate the conversation and keep it moving from member to member rather than talking *to* the members.
- Decide to be comfortable with silence. Embrace the 15 seconds of silence which seem to be like an eternity. Realize that through silence, the Holy Spirit is working.
- Be a good listener. Try to listen actively. James 1:19 says, "My dear brothers and sisters, always be willing to listen and slow to speak." The point: STOP TALKING; LISTEN INSTEAD. Great leaders listen with their eyes, ears, and heart. (18 Second Pause)
- Remind the group why it exists. Your job as a leader is to cast a compelling vision. Keep that purpose at the forefront of every Small Group meeting.
- Involve everyone. Small groups are the places for people to be known and not just seen. Give time and create space for everyone to participate.

Great Small Group leaders are committed to personal spiritual growth.

It's your job to build an environment where spiritual and personal growth is experienced. This usually happens when the leader has first experienced this growth. What are you doing to facilitate your own spiritual development?

- Serve at church (outside of leading Small Group)
- Commit to personal quiet time outside of church and Small Group preparations
- Read spiritually encouraging books
- Read the Bible
- Seek out a mentor
- Keep a short account with God. Confess your sin and ask for forgiveness.

Great Small Group leaders remember that God is in charge.

Praying for your Small Group means recognizing that the ministry is in God's hands, not yours. You were not selected to lead your group on your own. God chose you; He will be with you. Trust in His power and lean on Him for support and guidance.

Small Group leaders who are great realize that the ministry belongs to God and can place the results—numerical growth, discipleship, etc.—in His hands.

Great Small Group leaders spend time with group members outside of meetings.

It could be a Taco Tuesday, movie night, or gingerbread house building contest. It doesn't matter what the theme or activity is; the point is to spend time together—do LIFE together—outside of group meetings.

1 Thessalonians 5:11 ESV

"Therefore encourage one another and build one another up . . . "