

## **Fathers Host Guide**

Thanks for stepping forward to host a small group. You'll not only get to be around other fathers as they grow, but you'll have the chance to grow yourself!

We're convinced that God works through small groups to challenge all of us to a new place. As you're the host, you're a key link in all of this.

In this document we outline the general role of a host and include tips on how to host and support your group.

### **How does a Fathers Small Group work?**

We recommend getting together (weekly), listening to the podcasts (one podcast per meeting) and then walking through that podcast's show notes/small group guide together (available to download at: [www.FathersPodcast.com](http://www.FathersPodcast.com)).

### **What is a host?**

Being a host means that you're willing to welcome a small group into your home - or another suitable location. You don't need to have all the answers, be a Bible expert or a trained facilitator. Just be friendly and take a shower beforehand.

### **Host Tips**

#### **Make it Safe**

Your group should be a safe place for people, wherever they are on their spiritual journey. Be sure to respect any and all questions, and let everyone know they're welcome to explore the ideas presented, even if they don't agree with them.

Some people might uncover experiences in their past that elicit emotion, even strong emotions. Be respectful of them. People probably don't want to be "fixed" or given advice. Listen in an understanding way, and affirm them for their discovery when appropriate.

#### **Have Clear Expectations**

Be sure that everyone knows your role as a host. You're there to help guide the discussion, but aren't the "teacher" or "Bible expert". Be sure to run through the Small Group Ground Rules (last page of this document). Be clear about these ground rules and ask that everyone commit to them and remind each other of them, if needed.

### **What If...**

#### **What if someone consistently breaks the ground rules of the group?**

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 about conflict within the group?**

Move the furniture against the walls and clear a space in the center of the room. Let the opposing parties fight, and whoever is left standing is right. (Kidding.)

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?**

This usually happens, and sometimes the chatty person is really 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 guy outside the group. 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, "Bob, 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?**

Community isn't always fun and salty snacks. It's being there for someone when they're hurting. First step is to see if there's a way that the whole group 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.

## **Small Group Ground Rules**

The following page is the Small Group Ground Rules agreement. Hand out a copy to each guy at the first meeting and run through each expectation. Be clear about these ground rules and ask that everyone commit to them and remind each other of them, if needed.

## **Small Group Ground Rules**

Let's all agree to commit to the following:

### **Accountability**

I'll show up every week unless I'm out of town or I've let the host know the (good) reason I will be absent.

### **Affirmation**

I acknowledge that every person in this group is at a different point in their life and I will value and affirm people for where they are.

### **Confidentiality**

I'll maintain complete confidentiality. What I hear and say here, stays here.

### **Listening**

I understand that others will need to be encouraged to share, to be open and to express emotion. I will let them do so, without being judgmental, trying to "fix" them or offering unsolicited advice.

### **Self-Awareness**

I understand that some of us are talkers and some are quieter, so I'll be aware of not dominating the discussion or always leaving the weight of it to others.

### **Vulnerability**

I'll stretch myself to be open and honest as I can with my perspectives and experience to create a safe environment that might encourage others to take risks, too.

### **Conflict**

Community can be very messy, and conflicts may arise. I'll offer grace to others and won't leave the group over disagreements, realizing God might use conflict in my spiritual formation in some way I don't currently understand.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Witnessed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_