



Group Host Resources

Outrageous Hospitality

Above all, we want to create environments that make people feel safe to share what's going on in their lives. At UNITED, we intentionally focus on every single detail in our worship experiences to make sure that we are setting ourselves up to see people experience Jesus. And as a Group Host, we want you to do the same.

Failing to create the right atmosphere will create a mental deficit that has the potential to derail your Group meeting. Focusing on the minor details that are often overlooked will provide the distraction-free environment your Group needs to succeed.

EVERY DETAIL MATTERS.

- Make sure the first impression doesn't turn people away from your Group. Clean up a little bit—don't spend hours cleaning your house every week, but make sure your guests aren't tripping over your child's toys as they walk in the house.
- Temperature, lighting, and scent matter a lot more than you think. Proper lighting, a comfortable room, and a pleasant scent, such as coffee brewing in the kitchen, will allow your Group to focus and settle in for a more engaging discussion.

PUT YOURSELF IN THEIR SHOES.

- If you want to attain any sort of depth or transparency in your discussion, you will need to do whatever it takes to eliminate any distractions that could potentially hinder one of your Group members. Ask yourself, "What would it take for me to feel completely comfortable in someone else's home?"
- Make this a regular part of your Group preparation. Comfortable chairs, seating arrangements, and refreshments may not seem like a big deal to you. But by preparing for these things, you create a distraction-free environment that will allow people to focus solely on what God wants to speak to them.

Here are a few tips for how to revitalize the atmosphere in your Group and keep it fresh:

CHANGE THINGS UP. It's just as simple as it sounds. Get out and do something different with your Group. Meet somewhere new. People value consistency but don't be afraid to make a

change of scenery if you sense that your Group needs it. This simple practice of removing people from their comfort zone will push them and challenge them to grow.

DO SOMETHING FUN. At the end of the day, we've empowered you to Host a Group in order to build community in our church. And Groups that have fun together will grow together. Make it a habit to occasionally break from the monotony and go somewhere special or do something fun as a Group. You'll be refreshed, your Group will grow closer together, and you'll be ready to come back and take your Group to the next level.

CHALLENGE YOUR COMFORT ZONE. By now, you should know your strengths, weaknesses, what generally works in your Group, and what typically falls flat on its face. Play to your Group's strengths, but don't settle for what's comfortable. Challenge your Group. If they're quiet, make them do something interactive. If they are hyperactive, make them slow down. Your sweet spot will always exist just outside of your comfort zone.

Icebreakers

Every Group has to start somewhere. Before your Group can really dive into meaningful discussion, you have to break the ice and get people to participate with each other. Below are a few sample icebreakers that will help you start your Group meeting the right way. Feel free to use whichever examples would be the most appropriate for your Group.

HAVE SOME FUN.

- What's the strangest food you've ever eaten?
- What is your favorite band of all time? Book? Author? Song?
- What did you want to be when you were growing up?
- Two truths and a lie: Each person has to tell two truths and one lie about him or herself. Then the Group has to guess which statement was a lie.
- Pass a bag of M&Ms around and ask your Group members to take some. Don't tell them how many or why. Simply ask them to take as many as they want and that everyone should take at least one. When everyone has chosen their M&Ms, have them share as many facts about themselves as they have M&Ms. They can eat the M&Ms, too!

TAKE IT A STEP FURTHER.

- If you had to name one person who has influenced you the most, what person would you name?
- After you die, what is one thing you'd like to be remembered for?
- If you had your dream job 10 years from now, what would it be?
- What would the title be to this chapter of your life?

Next Level Icebreakers

These icebreakers are specifically designed for the long-term Group members who are looking to grow deeper in their faith. They are made to immediately engage your Group with challenging and thought provoking material.

PERSONAL REFLECTION:

- Have Group members identify the spiritual gifts that they bring to the Group. (Ex. Service, Teaching, Love, Comfort, Generosity, Encouragement, etc.)
- Who has Jesus been to you this week? (Ex. Counselor, Friend, Savior, etc.)
- Where do you feel closest to God?
- What teaching from Pastor Kenneth has impacted you the most since you've been attending UNITED?

REFLECT ON YOUR SURROUNDINGS:

- How do you feel about the way Christians are represented in the media or in our world?
- Do you ever see God's presence in others? If so, in what ways?
- Briefly describe someone who planted a seed of faith in your life.
- If you could change one aspect of our culture in America today, what would it be? Why?

GOING DEEPER:

- Where do you feel you need God's direction the most? In what areas of your life are you struggling?
- What kind of relationship, if any, are you seeking in your life right now?
- How is God speaking into your life today? In what areas of your life is He growing you the most right now?

Discussion Time

Whether you are Hosting a Bible/Book Study Group, Sermon Series Group, or a Common Interest-based Group, we are asking you to Host your Group in some sort of discussion time. This time will go a long way towards the success (or failure) of the Group. And while we don't expect you to have all the answers, we do want to equip you with the essentials of managing and leading a dynamic Group discussion.

SHARING IS CONTAGIOUS. In any Group setting, talking is contagious. Silence is contagious. Everything is. Create some inertia for your Group and keep it moving in the right direction.

KEEP IT OPEN-ENDED. Stay away from “Yes” or “No” questions. Push your Group to dig past the surface by asking, “Why or why not?” Or, “What makes you feel that way?” Or, “How would you respond to that?”

USE THE FUNNEL. Ask broad questions first, and then work your way to a more narrow scope, just like the shape of a funnel. Ask questions that believers and nonbelievers would relate to. Then, drive home your application points by asking more specific questions that apply to your walk with God.

SHOW PEOPLE WHAT THEY’RE LEARNING. Many of your Group members may be visual learners, so use plenty of visual aids to assist them. Get creative. Use white boards, index cards, or find an object that your Group members must hold in order to speak. Visual aides will help make the discussion stick with your Group members.

FOLLOW THE B’S. Tell your Group members to keep their answers brief, Biblical, and beneficial. This will keep your Group on track, give the talkative person a limit, and give the quiet person confidence in their brevity.

FIND A LANDING POINT. Establish a goal for each discussion with your Group. Steer the conversation to land there at the end of the meeting. Even if your Group lands somewhere else, it’s always beneficial to achieve something in your discussion.

Keeping Discussions Engaging

Over time, your Group will find its groove during discussion. As the Host, don’t tiptoe the line of your Group’s comfort zone. Doing so may cause your Group’s discussion time to become too redundant, ritualized, and un-impactful. Here are a few tips to help you push your Group to maintain an engaging discussion time:

EMPOWER YOUR CO-HOST. If you feel comfortable, challenge your Co-Host, if you have one, to Host the Group in discussion for a meeting. This will allow your Group to hear a new voice Hosting the discussion and will also free you up to contribute to the Group from another perspective. Read more about selecting a Co-Host later in this booklet.

SPLIT INTO GROUPS. You can divide your Group up in a number of ways, from men and women to a random count-off. But by creating several small groups within your Group, you will challenge new voices to speak up that might have otherwise disappeared in the larger Group setting.

USE ACTIVITIES. Finding creative ways to apply the discussion will make the application personal to each Group member. This should push people to engage with the discussion beyond mere listening. Have people come up with individual takeaways from the discussion. Ask them

to bring a verse or passage pertaining to your discussion topic that has affected them personally.

BE A BETTER LISTENER. Perhaps the key to improving your Group's discussion doesn't involve talking at all. By actively listening to your Group members, your people will be able to dig deeper into their thoughts, struggles, and victories. This will also open the door for greater follow up questions that will take the discussion to a deeper level.

Personal Growth

ONLINE RESOURCES:

- BibleGateway.com: This is a great resource for reading through and searching the Bible for specific topics and passages. If you're looking for passages on forgiveness, grace, or hope, start here.
- Bible.cc: This is a free online Parallel Bible that allows you to compare different translations simultaneously. If one translation is confusing you, try comparing it to another.
- RightnowMedia.org: Online Bible studies, leadership conferences, Kids material, and more. Instantly stream biblical teaching to you, your family, or your Group. Resources from over 150 leading Christian publishers and ministries.

UNITED CHURCH SERMON ARCHIVE:

- Every sermon series we've ever done is available to you for free on our website: www.UNITEDChurchDE.com/watch

BOOK SUGGESTIONS:

- *The Road Back to You: An Enneagram Journey to Self-Discovery* by Ian Morgan Cron & Suzanne Stabile
- *Awakening Grace* by Matt LeRoy & Jeremy Summers
- *Developing the Leader Within You 2.0* by John C. Maxwell
- *Love & Respect* by Dr. Emerson Eggeriches
- *Grown-Up Faith* by Pastor Kevin Myers
- *Deep & Wide* by Pastor Andy Stanley
- *What's Next?* by Pastor Chris Hodges

ON-THE-GO GROWTH:

The Bible App: YouVersion, created by LifeChurch.tv, puts the entire Bible (in over 25 translations) right at your fingertips.

RightNow Media App: Listen to 10,000+ biblical teachings on the go wherever you are.

Who's Next?

As a Group Host who embodies the vision of UNITED Church and where we are going as a church, we invite you to speak into the next generation of Group Hosts. You are thinking about those in your Group who would make excellent UNITED Group Hosts. Some qualities to look for:

- A growing and vibrant relationship with Christ and passion for the vision of UNITED Church and our Groups.
- An understanding of the role and their ability to live out the role of a UNITED Group Host.