

# LEADER'S RESOURCE GUIDE

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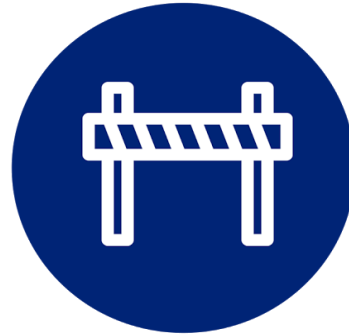
VISION



STEWARDSHIP



MEETINGS



OBSTACLES



RESOURCES



# VISION

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**“Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so he may run who reads it.”**

Habakkuk 2:2

# Community Groups and their purpose

**Community Groups exist to promote spiritual and personal growth through meaningful Christian relationships and the study of God's Word. Our focus is on five primary activities:**

## **Share**

Each week we take time to share what is happening in our lives. Until we get to know one another, we may use a variety of icebreakers. After the first few weeks, it will become more informal and personal as we feel more comfortable.

## **Study**

Each week we'll study a section from God's Word that relates to the previous weekend's sermon or an appropriate personal growth topic. Our goal is to learn how to read and study Scripture and consequently live out our faith in everyday life.

## **Support**

Each week we'll learn how to take care of one another as Christ commanded (John 15:9-13). This care can take many forms such as prayer, encouragement, listening, challenging one another, and meeting real needs.

## **Serve**

Spiritual Growth is fostered not only by studying God's Word and by what we gain through the support and input of others, but also through service to others. We are called to be the hands and feet of Jesus to our community. That's why, as a group, we find ways to serve in tangible and real ways.

## **Pray**

Prayer is at the very core of our Christian life. Praying together connects us with God and with each other. And the joy of prayer is essential to what it means to be Christian. Without prayer, there is no true relationship with Him.

**“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”**

Hebrews 10:24-25

# Community Groups are about strengthening our relationship with God, each other and our communities

Weekend gatherings are essential in our growth as believers. It's here that we worship and learn together.

Community Groups allow us to connect with one another, share each other's burdens and truly explore what it means to follow Christ.

Weekend Gathering	Community Group
we worship together	we live out the "one anothers" found in Scripture
we listen to sound biblical teaching	we discuss how the message and the biblical passage(s) impact our lives.
we are challenged by a message	we hold each other accountable
we receive prayer from our pastor	we pray for each other's specific needs
we learn through listening	we learn through asking questions and discussing Scripture
we participate in communion	we break bread together
we learn about and pray for ministries our church body is involved in	we find ways to reach out to our community by doing service projects together

## Love in Action

**"Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality."**

Romans 12:9-13

## Fellowship at Community Fellowship Church

One of the most important words in the English language is the word *relationship*. Love, peace, hope, joy, and essentially everything worth having, travels through relationships. The Bible is essentially about relationships. In the New Testament alone, there are over 50 “one another” statements, telling us how important our relationships with other people, particularly other Christians, is to our walk with Jesus.

We see in Acts 2 that the first church “devoted themselves” to being together, eating together, and worshipping together. This is why, at CFC, we believe strongly in being a part of a Community Group. We believe that in community, life changes happen, and it is the foundation for spiritual growth and direction. In our increasing individualistic and isolated society, we seek to go against that trend, which is why our Community Groups are relational by design.

Each Community Group is also missional. This means that they seek to carry out the mission that God has given to CFC in the group’s context. We recognize that in our culture it is easier and less painful to avoid the relational challenges of being a part of a community. God has called us as Christians to live differently and to pursue holiness together. This is the essence of fellowship.

### **Here are eight characteristics of what we believe it means to be in biblical fellowship:**

1. Honesty (1 John 1:7-8, James 5:16)
2. Unity (John 17:20-21, 1 Corinthians 12:25, Romans 1:12;12:4-5)
3. Compassion (Ephesians 4:32, Colossians 3:12)
4. Mercy (2 Corinthians 2:7, Colossians 3:13)
5. Confrontation (Ephesians 4:15, Galatians 6:1-2)
6. Humility (Philippians 2:3-11, 1 Peter 5:5)
7. Trust (Proverbs 16:28)
8. Time (Hebrews 10:24-25)

**“I am in them and you are in me. May they experience such perfect unity that the world will know that you sent me and that you love them as much as you love me.”**

John 17:23



# STEWARDSHIP

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**“For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.”**

Luke 22:27

# The Difference Between a Shepherd and a Leader

## Leaders lead and shepherds shepherd

Leaders and shepherds have different gifts and skill-sets. The Scriptures define leadership as a spiritual gift (Romans 12:8). Shepherding is an analogy that Jesus used along with various writers of the New Testament to describe to an agrarian culture what spiritual leadership looks and acts like.

## People are led by leaders and cared for by shepherds

People follow leaders because the very essence of a leader is to lead. They're going somewhere and people are inspired to go with them. On the other hand, people often feel endeared to shepherds because shepherds know their name, know what's going on in their lives and provide more intimate care to their flock.

## Shepherds have their eyes on the flock while leaders have their eyes on the hill

Shepherds and leaders naturally think about and fix their gaze on different things. Shepherds are consumed with the state of the flock while leaders naturally drift toward the future and where they're taking people. Some of the best leaders not only have a leadership gift, but also have the heart of a shepherd. Leaders who don't naturally have the heart of a shepherd would do well and benefit by surrounding themselves with others on the team who do.

**“Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.”**

1 Peter 5:2-4

# Community Group Leader Expectations

## To lead a Community Group, we ask that you are/have:

- Committed to lead a group for a minimum of one year
- Committed to integrity, character and spiritual growth
- Attended a new leader training and reviewed the leader resources guide
- Identified a mentor/coach to walk alongside you
- Participated in a Sermon-Based Community Group for at least one trimester
- Committed to attending two Leader Huddles and the annual CG leader conference
- Sign the Community Group Leader Covenant

## Skills / Abilities

- Leadership, shepherding, and/or facilitating – strength in one or more of these areas
- Social Skills – values relating and connecting with others
- Biblical Literacy – foundational understanding of scripture

## Expectations of a leader

- Pray for your group members
- Prepare for your meetings
- Communicate special needs or challenges to your Community Groups Director
- Provide feedback on your group to your Community Groups Director and mentor
- Follow up promptly with potential new members
- Commit group to one service project per trimester
- Assign roles for members in your group
  - Snacks/food
  - Childcare if applicable
  - Communication with other members
  - Lead on service projects
  - Prayer requests
- As you grow numerically, help identify and mentor new potential leaders



## Mentoring new leaders

**“I myself am convinced, my brothers and sisters, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with knowledge and competent to instruct one another.”**

Romans 15:14

Throughout scripture, great men and women of God had mentoring relationships. Exodus tells us the story of Moses as he was mentored by his father-in-law Jethro and then later went on to mentor Joshua. In 1 Samuel, we learn of Eli who mentored Samuel and later the book of Ruth portrays Naomi as a mentor to Ruth, her Moabite daughter-in-law. The prophet Elijah mentored Elisha and even in the New Testament we find Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, mentoring Mary after she learned she was to be the mother of Jesus.

**As you step into your role as a Community Group leader...** the modeling, encouragement and listening ear of an established leader can prove invaluable. Especially when it comes from someone you have come to know and grown to respect. That’s why you are asked to choose a mentor from within CFC; someone who has led before or has been in a leadership position at CFC.

You will want to connect with your mentor as you start your journey of leading your group. Here are some additional thoughts to consider:

- Connect with your mentor prior to your first meeting, if possible
- Schedule follow-up meetings as needed
- Keep your meetings to 45 minutes or less
- Be prepared to answer the following questions:
  - What is working well for you?
  - What areas may need improvement?
  - How can your mentor be praying for you?

**“To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder and a witness of Christ’s sufferings who also will share in the glory to be revealed: Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, watching over them — not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; not lording over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.”**

1 Peter 5:1-3

## Asking questions rather than giving answers

Asking good questions is the best way for a leader to create a conversational environment. We know this is true because of Christ's example. Throughout His ministry, He was asked many questions and responded with few answers. Instead, He asked questions as His answer. Jesus knew that good questions challenge people to consider the truth, think about their own experience, and take ownership of their faith journey.

### Here are a few tips:

- Ask open-ended questions, not those that can be answered with a simple yes or no. (For example, begin questions with who, what, when and/or where).
- Ask questions that evoke feelings, thoughts, and insights.
- Ask questions that do not have just one right answer.
- Ask questions that encourage the sharing of personal examples.
- Ask questions that stimulate people to apply what they are learning.

Strong leaders don't simply answer group members' questions; they respond by encouraging participation from the whole group and asking follow-up questions. They connect questions to the discussion topic, admit their own struggles with difficult questions, and encourage self-discovery by allowing the group members to arrive at conclusions themselves.

Directing questions strategically, also allows us to engage members of our group that tend to be quiet. A word of caution here: Our goal is never to put people on the spot; group members will share when they are ready and when we create the right and safe environment for them to do so.

**“Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.”**

Colossians 3:12



# MEETINGS

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**“He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.”**

1 Thessalonians 5:10-11

# Make Your First Meeting Awesome!

Especially when we are starting with a new group and with people you may not yet know, it's important to make a great first impression. Our experience tells us that quite a few folks will decide whether they will stay with the group in the first 10 minutes of your initial meeting. Experience shows this is even more true for new and searching believers.

We'll never be able to make it "perfect" for everyone and we need to be at peace with that fact; there are however a lot of steps we can take that can help foster authentic relationships and an environment where people can feel safe, have fun, and at the same time grow in their relationship with Christ. Here are a few ideas for you to consider as you open your home for your first Community Group meeting:

## Prior to the meeting

- Send out a friendly email reminder with time and address
- Encourage everyone to bring a snack
- Prepare your home for the meeting (find a spot for your pets outside of meeting area)
- Pray about your new group

## At the meeting

- Welcome as many people personally as possible as they come in
- Use name tags for people to get to learn one another's names
- Allow ample time for snacks and conversations
- Start with prayer, then introductions, followed by an icebreaker
- Have a conversation about the discussion topic for the trimester
- Include Scripture
- Ask for prayer requests and praise reports and pray together as a group
- Discuss expectations (hand out the Community Group Covenant)
- Decide on how you will best communicate as a group
- Start and stop on time (this is really important)

## Meeting follow up

- Send out a group text/email the day after the meeting (thanking everyone for coming and share the prayer requests from your time together)
- Send out reminder for the next meeting including the date, day and time

# Community Group Covenant

Community Fellowship Church (CFC) mission is to make committed followers of Christ through worship, evangelism, fellowship, discipleship, and service. At CFC, Community Groups are an essential part of our mission.

Because we only attend one corporate gathering per week, much spiritual growth and relationship building happens within Community Groups. Throughout Scripture, community is integral for the carrying out of God's mission. God chooses to work through people to redeem His world.

This is the reason CFC has developed the following covenant to outline the value it places on Community Groups and their significance for one's personal growth with Christ.

## **As a Community Group Member, I pledge to the following:**

- Make attendance at our group meetings a priority and to let the group leaders know in advance if I will not be present
- Pray for one another regularly, specifically lifting our needs and praises up to God
- Be honest and seek to be transparent and grow in trust with one another
- Never share or divulge anything shared in confidence within the group with others outside of the group
- Help with meeting preparation, clean-up and other activities
- Give permission to group members to hold me accountable to areas agreed upon
- Invest in lives of the members as much as possible, inside and outside of group meetings
- Participate in group service projects
- Live out my faith in my daily life and to allow my relationship with God to influence and determine my daily lifestyle and interaction with others

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another, and even more as you see the Day approaching.”**

Hebrews 10:24-25

# Ice Breakers

Fellowship is not always easy even for followers of Christ. Scripture tells us that we ought to walk in the way of love (Ephesians 5:2); in the New Testament alone there are 60 “one another’s”.

Because we are all uniquely made, it can be hard at times to move our groups toward authentic conversations where we can grow, connect and learn. One way to break through some of these walls is to introduce icebreakers that help us be more open and comfortable with each other.

Ice breakers should be fun but more importantly should help us learn more about each other. Here are some examples:

- **Two Truths and a Lie**

Have each person make three statements about themselves: two true statements and one lie. For example, “I went on a mission trip to the Antarctica. I have 5 sisters. I was born in a taxi.” The group tries to guess which statement is the lie.

- **M&M's Game**

Pass a bag of M&M’s around and tell everyone to take a few. Then, before they eat them ask them to share something for every M&M. For example, something about their family for every red, something about their plans for the future for every green, etc.

- **Defining Moment**

Ask everyone in the group to share a defining moment in their life as they were growing up. Something that impacted their life and shaped their journey. How is their life different today because of this incident?

- **Who was your hero?**

Ask each member to name three people, past or present, whom they admire. Why? Or, ask them if they could interview anyone in history, who would that be and why? What one or two questions would you want to ask?

## Ice Breakers continued

- **Make Believe**

If you could go anywhere in the world now, where would you go and why? If you could talk to anyone in the world, who would it be? Why? If you could talk to any person who has died, who would you talk to and why?

- **House on Fire**

Ask, “Your house is on fire, and everyone is safe. You have 30 seconds to run through the house and collect three or four articles you want to save. What would you grab? Why?” After everyone has done this, the group can discuss what they learned about the things they value.

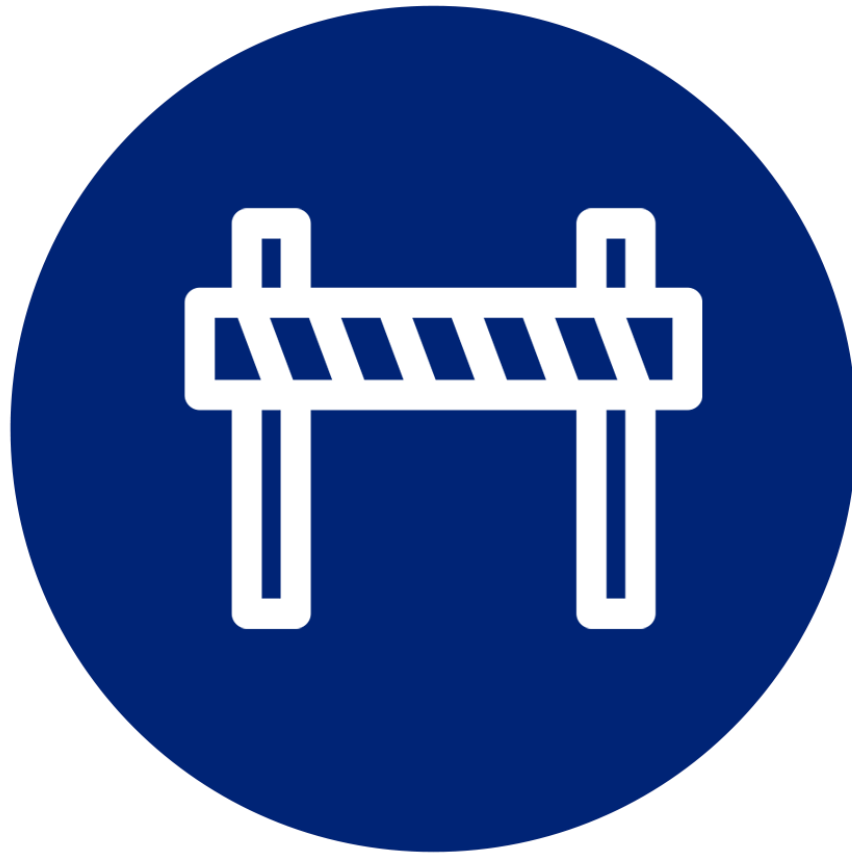
- **How would you change the world?**

This will engage people’s imaginations and help them share their passion. Ask the question, “How would you use \$1 million to change the world?” After everyone has had a chance to share, ask the same question about \$100 and then about \$1,000.

- **This week in Facebook**

Instead of treating the smartphones in everyone’s hand as a distraction, use them to get people talking. Ask everyone to pull out their smartphone and find their latest favorite picture, video or story on their social network of choice. (It doesn’t have to be theirs. It might be a friend or family member’s.) Have everyone share why it piques their interest.

When we are in a group with believers, it can be an encouragement for all to share your personal story and testimony. That can be a powerful ice breaker that can lead to awesome conversations. With a new group where we are not sure if everyone has a relationship with Christ or if they are still seeking, this kind of icebreaker may be quite awkward and therefore not recommended.



# OBSTACLES

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**“But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.”**

James 1:5



# The Four Questions

Here are four key questions to ask when someone comes to you with any issue they're experiencing. These questions will demonstrate that you care about what they're going through, and they will help you gain clarity of what's going on. Getting the facts and context usually makes the next steps relatively straightforward on how to support them or to provide them with the kind of help they may need.

**1. How long have you been dealing with this? (The duration of the issue)**

- When did this first occur?

**2. Who else knows? (Involvement of others)**

- Have you talked to anyone else about this? If so, who? How often?
- Do any other people know?
- When was the last time you talked to someone about it?
- How did they respond?

**3. Have you received any advice or counsel on how to deal with this?**

- What have those you've talked to said about this situation?
- Have you sought any other help or resources regarding this issue?

**4. Do you have any plans for your next steps?**

- What do you think might be your next step?
- Would you like me to check on some other resources? (Don't make the calls, but give them referrals, etc.)

**5. Pray**

- Never miss an opportunity to pray for someone in a challenging situation.

**“For where two or three gather together in My name, there am I with them.”**

Matthew 18:20

# Principles of Loving Christian Confrontation

In Matthew 18:15-17, God has given us clear principles for loving confrontation.

**“If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’ If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.”**

## **1. The goal is restoration**

The temptation is to confront someone just to make ourselves feel better or to hurt someone who has hurt us. But that is not love. The goal in confrontation is restoring your relationship with them and their relationship with God.

## **2. Begin by approaching this believer in private**

While it is easier to stuff our hurt down deep inside, or to gossip about them to others – the first loving step is to confront them in private.

## **3. Loving confrontation may need to involve others who also love this person**

Confronting a fellow believer in Christ may not always lead to restoration but we are not to throw up our hands in despair. Continue the process of restoration with other like-minded believers.

## **4. Loving confrontation may need to involve the leaders of your church or organization.**

If this believer refuses to repent, it is time to involve the leaders of your church. Lord willing, because they respect the authority of the church, this person will see the seriousness of that sin, repent, and return.

## Four Actions to Avoid in Conflict Resolution

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Do not avoid the conflict, hoping it will go away.</b></p> <p>It won't. Even if the conflict appears to have been superficially put to rest, it will rear its ugly head whenever stress increases or a new disagreement occurs.</p> <p>An unresolved conflict in your group can destroy all the trust you have worked so hard to build. This, too, shall pass, is not a good option – ever.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Do not meet separately with people in conflict.</b></p> <p>The person in conflict has a vested interest in making himself or herself “right” if you place yourself in the position of judge and jury.</p> <p>Too often this can lead to “he said - she said” and as a result it can encourage gossip.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Do not believe, for even a moment, the only people who are affected by the conflict are the participants.</b></p> <p>Everyone in your Community Group is affected by the stress. People will feel as if they are walking on eggshells.</p> <p>In worst case scenarios, your group members take sides and this will divide your group.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Choose not to be offended. You cannot control the outcome.</b></p> <p>Especially when we seek to love those in our care, it hurts when things don't turn out the way we want.</p> <p>When it comes to serious conflict in your group, many times this is a wonderful time to ask for help.</p>



# RESOURCES

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**“Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding;  
in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.”**

Proverbs 3:5-6

## Frequently Asked Questions

Our home is very small. Can we have someone else in our group host our meetings?

Many groups will rotate their meeting place and duties. It's one more way to get other members involved. We do want to encourage groups to meet in home environments; it's more personal and people tend to be more comfortable opening up.

Our group can't meet every week. Is that OK?

We encourage groups to meet every week to build a stronger bond and to grow together. Give it a try for one semester and see how the group responds.

Our group is made up of young married couples. Can we do a Bible study specifically addressing marriage instead of following along with the sermon series?

Yes. While we want to encourage Community Groups to study the sermon series, we trust you as leaders to choose a different study if you feel it's appropriate. We do ask that you let us know.

There are 16 people in our group, and we really like each other. What should we do?

It's awesome to be in a group where everyone connects well. Even more important is our goal of growing stronger in our faith and love for our Savior, Jesus Christ. When your group exceeds 12 members, consider splitting the group and continue to serve on projects together and have social time together. Keep looking for potential leaders within your group; have them lead the study a few times here and there. They could possibly start a new group in the future.

What should we do if new people are interested in joining our group in the middle of a 10-week series?

Many times, when we add new people to a Community Group we go through a time of getting to know one another. That's awesome for a new group, but for an existing group it can have a negative effect on authentic discussion. With three seasons for Community Groups, the next on-ramp is never far away. Until then, encourage them to mark the first meeting date on their calendar and stay connected with them at church or meetup for coffee.

What happens when someone in our group wants to leave and join another group?

One of the reasons we have trimesters is that it gives people an opportunity to try a new group. We do ask that they commit to your group for a season and make every effort to contribute, but after that, if they find a group that may be a better fit for them, please support their decision. Be careful not to take this personally and remember that if they feel that they can grow more in another group, then we should encourage them in their decision.

Because of everyone's busy lives right now only half our members can make it to the meeting. Should we cancel our meeting?

If only one or two people can come, we have a wonderful opportunity to get to know them better. Sometimes these meetings can prove life-changing. Be encouraged to always keep your meeting as scheduled unless the weather makes it unsafe to do so.

We only have three couples in our group right now and would like to expand. What can we do to grow our group?

You can certainly invite friends from church that are not connected to join your group. Some groups have also invited coworkers or neighbors into their group. Throughout the year we have a lot of people reach out to us as well wanting to get connected to a group, and if we know that you have room, and it seems like a good fit, we're glad to make the introduction.

What is a good size for a Community Group?

We recommend that groups don't get much larger than 10 people. When groups are too large you tend to lose transparency and authenticity. Some groups will even stay at 7 or 8 members for that very reason.

Our group is made up of young couples with children. How do we best address childcare?

Many groups offer childcare to make it easy for both parents to attend and participate. Most groups will hire someone for this task and share in the cost. If you have trouble finding someone, let us know; we'll be glad to share names of people willing to help.

One of our members has been dealing with some challenging times and we spend much of our time and conversations focusing on him. By doing so, it has caused others not to come. Any advice?

As believers and certainly as leaders we want to make sure to love others well. Sometimes that can mean that we need to meet with some people outside of the group environment. One of the tools we use is the “four questions” concept found in the resources section, which can help clarify the situation and encourage positive action. Do not hesitate to reach out to your mentor or the Community Groups Director for help.

We have an awesome group and everyone seems to get along, but there still is a hesitancy to share in meaningful conversations. How do we achieve authenticity in our group?

For people to be truly honest with one another they must know that they can trust the group. That can take some time and patience. There are some things you can do however to help the process along. Using some of the icebreakers can help (even for a few meetings in a row). Another proven method has been to have men and women separate for prayer time at the last part of the meeting.

Should we be serving food at our meetings?

Sharing a meal with your group can be a great way to foster deeper relationships with other group members. That’s why many groups will include time for a meal or snacks. The key to having success with this is to share the load and ask members to contribute by taking turns in bringing food and helping to clean up.

Sometimes I feel inadequate as a leader, especially when questions arise that I can’t answer. What should I do?

It’s awesome when our group conversations get so deep that we get into areas where we struggle with finding the right answers. It’s important to understand that none of us have all the answers and that that’s OK. Never hesitate to reach out and ask for help. Pastor Bobby, Jason and/or one of the elders are eager to be of support. In addition, we will be offering more in-depth seminars here at CFC with a focus on biblical literacy that you are encouraged to attend.

## Websites for CG Leaders

### Serving Well: [www.cfcleaders.org](http://www.cfcleaders.org)

Stay up to date on the latest news and service project ideas.

- Service projects: Here you'll find some service project ideas. Each one has been researched and includes information on how your group can serve. Direct contact information is included.
- Current Projects: Check here first for current needs, and don't hesitate to contact us for more info.
- Calendar Access: Looking for the upcoming training date? Not sure when the next trimester begins or ends? Check here.
- Facebook Page: Connect with other CFC leaders and contribute to the conversation.
- Blog News: Find the minutes from the last leadership meeting, get info on the upcoming events, etc.
- Group Finder Tool: Want to see if your group is considered open? Do you want to see how your group description looks (if it is open)? Check out our online tool for people interested in joining a group.

### FACEBOOK PAGE: [www.facebook.com/groups/cfcleaders/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/cfcleaders/)

Community Group leaders can stay connected with one another and CFC Ministry leaders by joining the Facebook page created just for them.

### Right Now Media

Community Fellowship Church has given CFC's access to RightNow Media, which gives users access to over 20,000 video bible studies on a variety of topics. Gain access by emailing [rightnow@communityfellowship.com](mailto:rightnow@communityfellowship.com).