



Preparing Well for Group Meetings



What This is About

Showing up prepared turns a good group into a great one. Preparation helps you lead with confidence, keeps discussions focused, and creates an environment where God can move powerfully. When leaders prepare their hearts and plans, groups sense intentionality and value.



Why It Matters

- Reduces stress during meetings so you can be fully present with people.
- Creates a purposeful flow that honors everyone's time.
- Opens space for the Holy Spirit to work through you and your preparation.



Best Practices for Leaders

1 Pray Beforehand

- Invite God to prepare your heart and guide your words.

2 Study the Scripture

- Read the passage you'll discuss; let it speak to you first.

3 Review Questions

- Think about how they'll resonate with your group and adjust if needed.

4 Prepare Personal Examples

- Relatable stories make discussions come alive.

5 Anticipate Challenges

- Consider where conversation might stall or go off track and plan how to respond.

6 Plan the Night's Flow

- Know how you'll transition between opening, discussion, and prayer.

7 Pray for Members by Name

- Covering your group in prayer during the week deepens your heart for them and invites God to work.

A Leadership Reminder

2 Timothy 2:15 challenges us to be diligent and handle God's Word well, your preparation honors God and your group, creating space for lives to be changed.



Encouraging Openness Without Oversharing



What This is About

We want groups to be places where people are real. But sometimes, someone shares details too graphic, deeply personal, or off-topic, which can derail conversation or make others uncomfortable. Leaders need to encourage healthy vulnerability while helping members share appropriately.



Why It Matters

- Healthy sharing builds trust and fosters deeper discipleship.
- Oversharing can lead to discomfort or shut others down from engaging.
- Setting healthy boundaries helps people see this is a safe, purposeful space, not a free-for-all.



Best Practices for Leaders



1 Model Appropriate Sharing

- Be open about struggles without getting graphic or oversharing



2 Set Expectations Early

- At your first meeting, say, “We want to be honest but also respectful about what we share.”



3 Gently Redirect

- If someone overshares, kindly step in: “Thank you for trusting us. Let’s pause here and keep it focused on tonight’s topic.”



4 Offer One-on-One

- Let them know you’re available to talk privately if they need to process more deeply.



5 Create Guidelines Together

- Invite the group to agree on what’s helpful to share in group settings.

A Leadership Reminder

James 1:5 says to ask God for wisdom, and He gives it generously. You don’t have to have perfect words; your calm leadership will help guide conversations into life-giving places.



Navigating Tough or Emotional Moments



What This is About

When someone shares about grief, addiction, or a deep wound, it can take the group into intense territory fast. These moments often make leaders feel unprepared, but they're also holy opportunities to bring light into darkness by offering presence, prayer, and hope.



Why It Matters

- Creates a space where people know they don't have to hide.
- Builds trust that the group is more than a social club, it's a spiritual family.
- Reminds everyone Jesus meets us in our pain, not just our victories.



Best Practices for Leaders



1 Stay Present

- Make eye contact and show you're listening without panic.



2 Acknowledge Emotions

- "Thank you for trusting us with that."



3 Pray Together

- Pause the discussion to lift them up as a group.



4 Follow Up Later

- Check in privately: "How are you doing after sharing that?"



5 Know When to Refer

- If it involves abuse, suicidal thoughts, or other crises, connect them with pastoral care immediately.

A Leadership Reminder

Jesus never rushed past hurting people, He stopped, listened, and loved them. You don't need to fix everything; your faithful presence points people to Him.



Building Trust and Safety Early



What This is About

Trust doesn't just happen, it's built intentionally. Without it, people won't risk sharing what's really going on in their lives. Leaders who prioritize trust help groups go beyond shallow conversations to real life change and connection.



Why It Matters

- Trust is the foundation of authentic biblical community (Proverbs 27:17).
- Safe groups help people take off masks and find healing.
- Early trust creates lasting relationships that carry into life beyond group.



Best Practices for Leaders



1 Model Vulnerability First

- Share your own struggles or doubts, it gives others permission to do the same.



2 Establish Ground Rules

- Set expectations about confidentiality and respect.



3 Show Up Consistently

- Your reliability helps others feel secure.



4 Listen Well

- Give your full attention when someone speaks.



5 Celebrate Small Wins

- When someone takes a risk to share, affirm it: "Thanks for being real, that's what this group is for."

A Leadership Reminder

Jesus created trust with His disciples by walking with them daily. We reflect His heart when we prioritize connection over convenience.



Drawing Out Quiet Voices



What This is About

Some people in your group will hang back, unsure if they belong or worried their ideas aren't "good enough." As a leader, you have the chance to see and invite them into deeper connection, helping them discover they're an essential part of the group.



Why It Matters

- Quiet voices often have rich perspectives that help everyone grow.
- When everyone feels invited to speak, groups become a safe space for real discipleship.
- Building confidence in quieter members strengthens community and connection.



Best Practices for Leaders

1 Ask by Name

- "Tyler, I'd love to hear your thoughts."

2 Give Time

- After asking a question, pause for 5–10 seconds. Silence gives space for quieter thinkers.

3 Follow Up After Group

- Text or call: "I'd love to hear more of what you were thinking about that topic."

4 Celebrate Contributions

- Affirm when quiet members share: "Thanks for sharing, that was powerful."

5 Use Small Groups

- Breakout discussions help quieter folks engage without the pressure of a big group.

A Leadership Reminder

Jesus saw and called out those overlooked by others. Our groups should reflect His heart: creating spaces where everyone feels seen, known, and loved.



Handling Conflict or Tension



What This is About

Disagreements happen, even among believers. Whether it's differing opinions on a scripture or personal conflict, unresolved tension can derail groups and damage relationships. Leaders help navigate conflict in a way that honors God and strengthens community.



Why It Matters

- Addressing conflict builds a culture of grace and truth.
- Avoiding conflict leads to gossip, bitterness, or people quietly leaving.
- Healthy conflict resolution models Jesus' call to reconciliation (Matthew 18:15-17).



Best Practices for Leaders

1 Stay Calm

- Don't mirror anger or frustration; your peace sets the tone.

2 Address Issues Privately

- If tension arises, connect after group for a deeper conversation.

3 Listen to Understand

- Let each person share their side without interruption.

4 Point Back to Group Values

- Remind everyone you're here to follow Jesus together, not to win arguments.

5 Facilitate Apologies

- Encourage humility, forgiveness, and prayer if needed.

6 Get Pastoral Help If Needed

- When issues escalate or involve sensitive topics, bring in church staff to help navigate.

A Leadership Reminder

Romans 12:18 challenges us: "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone." Seek peace and trust God with the outcome.



Maintaining Consistency and Follow-Through

What This is About

Trust is built on showing up consistently and following through on what you say you'll do. Cancelling often, starting late, or forgetting commitments can signal to your group that they and your time together aren't important. Consistency honors God and your group.

Why It Matters

- Reliable leaders build trust and safety in the group.
- Consistency models faithfulness, which helps others prioritize their own walk with Jesus.
- Groups with steady leaders stay connected and committed over time.

Best Practices for Leaders

1 Show Up Prepared and On Time

- It shows you value the group's time.

2 Stick to the Schedule

- If you meet weekly, protect that rhythm; avoid last-minute cancellations unless truly necessary.

3 Follow Through on Promises

- If you say you'll pray, text, or send resources, do it quickly.

4 Communicate Clearly

- Keep members informed about any changes or special plans.

5 Delegate When Needed

- If you're unavailable, ask a co-leader to cover rather than cancel.

6 Celebrate Faithfulness

- Affirm group members who consistently show up; it reinforces the value of commitment.

A Leadership Reminder

Matthew 5:37 says, "Let your 'Yes' be yes, and your 'No,' no." Consistency shows your group they can trust you, and trust leads to deeper discipleship.



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Managing the Over-Talker

Helping every voice be heard in your group



What This is About

In every group, there's often one person who loves to share—sometimes a bit too much. While it's great to have engaged people, an over-talker can unintentionally dominate, leaving others feeling unheard or checked out. Healthy groups need space for everyone to participate.



Why It Matters

- Keeps the group balanced so all perspectives are valued.
- Builds trust by showing every voice matters.
- Maintains group engagement; no one wants to sit quietly every week.
- Models respect and self-awareness, key qualities of biblical community (Philippians 2:3-4).



Best Practices for Leaders

- 1 Set expectations early.
- 2 Use gentle interruptions.
- 3 Direct questions to others.
- 4 Employ time limits for sharing.
- 5 Affirm and redirect.



A Leadership Reminder

Your goal isn't to embarrass or shut someone down—it's to steward the group's time well so everyone grows.



Additional Resources

[Small Group Network: 8 Approaches When Dealing with a Discussion Dominator](#)



Challenging Without Condemning



What This is About

Discipleship means helping each other grow, and sometimes that requires gently challenging someone who's drifting, stuck in sin, or believing lies. Many leaders fear they'll sound judgmental, but loving challenge delivered with grace can spark true transformation.



Why It Matters

- Encourages growth and keeps sin or unhelpful patterns from becoming normal in the group.
- Models Jesus' combination of grace and truth (John 1:14).
- Builds authentic community that loves each other enough to speak hard truths.



Best Practices for Leaders



1 Build Relationship First

- People listen to challenge from someone who has earned their trust.



2 Check Your Motives

- Make sure you're seeking their good, not proving yourself right.



3 Use Private Conversations

- Correct or challenge privately, never to embarrass.



4 Speak with Humility

- Use "I" statements: "I'm concerned about..."



5 Point to Scripture

- Let God's Word, not your opinions, be the foundation.



6 Balance with Encouragement

- Remind them of their identity in Christ and God's grace.



7 Pray Together

- End with prayer, asking God to bring clarity, healing, and next steps.

A Leadership Reminder

Ephesians 4:15 calls us to speak the truth in love. Done right, challenge isn't condemnation, it's an invitation to freedom.



Encouraging Spiritual Rhythms for Personal Growth - Big 3 Know God

What This is About

Helping people know Jesus isn't just about gathering once a week, it's about walking with Him daily. Leaders have a key role in encouraging group members to develop rhythms of time in God's Word, prayer, worship, and community so faith becomes a lifestyle, not a checkbox.

Why It Matters

- Equips people to know God personally, not just know about Him.
- Spiritual habits keep faith growing even when life gets tough.
- Builds spiritual maturity and helps people follow Jesus in every area of life.

Best Practices for Leaders

Model Rhythms

- Share what your time in Scripture or prayer looks like, even the struggles.

Encourage Small Starts

- Invite members to read one verse a day or spend five minutes praying to build consistency.

Suggest Tools

- Point them to Bible apps, devotionals, or reading plans.

Check In Regularly

- Ask, "What's something God showed you this week?"

Celebrate Growth

- Affirm any step forward, no matter how small.

Tie Rhythms to Relationship

- Remind members these practices aren't chores, they're ways to draw close to the One who loves them most.

A Leadership Reminder

John 15:5 reminds us we can't do anything apart from Jesus, daily connection with Him is the fuel for life and discipleship.



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Modeling and Encouraging Loving Others - Big 3 Love Others

What This is About

At Flatirons, “Love Others” is more than a slogan, it’s at the heart of who we are as followers of Jesus. As leaders, we help our groups become places where people feel seen, valued, and loved unconditionally. We design environments where everyone feels respected and supported, and we encourage members to practice Christ-like love both inside and outside of group time.

Why It Matters

- Jesus said people will know we are His disciples by our love for one another (John 13:35).
- Loving others unconditionally reflects the heart of Christ to a hurting world.
- Creates a culture where people can drop masks, be real, and find healing.

Best Practices for Leaders

Model Empathy

- Show patience and grace when people share struggles or frustrations.

Practice Active Listening

- Give your full attention when someone speaks, phones down, eyes up.

Celebrate Diversity

- Welcome different backgrounds, perspectives, and stories as gifts that enrich the group.

Encourage Service Within the Group

- Look for opportunities to care for each other, like bringing meals during illness or offering rides when needed.

Highlight Forgiveness

- Lead conversations on forgiveness and demonstrate it when conflicts arise.

Challenge Each Other to Love Daily

- Ask, “How can we show Christ’s love in our work, family, or neighborhood this week?”

Recognize Acts of Love

- When someone goes out of their way to help, celebrate it publicly to inspire others.

A Leadership Reminder

Jesus didn’t just teach love, He lived it. As leaders, our willingness to love sacrificially creates spaces where the gospel comes alive and discipleship deepens.

Empowering Groups to Live on Mission – Big 3 Impact the World

What This is About

We're called not only to grow in our faith but to live it out by making a difference. Impacting the world means helping group members see themselves as agents of transformation in their communities. It means encouraging bold steps of generosity, service, and advocacy, both individually and together as a group, to bring God's love to life in tangible ways.

Why It Matters

- Jesus' last words were to "go and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19).
- Helping our group members serve others deepens their faith and dependence on God.
- Collective service strengthens group unity and demonstrates Christ's love to our city.

Best Practices for Leaders

1 Challenge Members Personally

- Regularly ask, "How are you impacting the world around you right now?"

2 Organize Group Service Projects:

- Serve at Flatirons events (baptisms, conferences, kid camps).
- Volunteer at local food pantries, shelters, or schools.
- Find causes that resonate with your group, like foster care, homelessness, or education, and rally together.

3 Partner with Flatirons Opportunities

Sign up as a group to help with church outreach or mission efforts.

4 Practice Generosity

- Collect items for donation drives or organize financial gifts for families in crisis.

5 Encourage Advocacy

- Discuss current needs in your city and challenge members to get involved with causes that bring hope.

6 Reflect on Impact

- After serving, take time in group to share experiences and celebrate what God did through your efforts.

A Leadership Reminder

Acts 1:8 reminds us we're empowered by the Holy Spirit to be witnesses in our neighborhoods and beyond. Leading your group to impact the world turns faith into action and brings God's kingdom closer to earth.



General Leadership Best Practices - Outside Scheduled Group Time



What This is About

Leading well doesn't stop when the group meeting ends. Some of the deepest discipleship happens in the everyday moments outside of official meetings, through texts, meals, shared struggles, and celebrations. Intentional connection beyond group night helps relationships grow from acquaintanceship to genuine family.



Why It Matters

- Reinforces that community is about sharing life, not just a weekly meeting.
- Models Jesus' example of walking daily with His disciples.
- Builds trust and connection that carry into group discussions.



Best Practices for Leaders

1 Stay Connected

- Send midweek encouragement texts, verses, or notes of prayer.

2 Plan Social Gatherings

- Host game nights, BBQs, or go bowling to deepen friendships.

3 Encourage Asking for Help

- Remind members it's okay to share needs; model this by sharing your own.

4 Train Co-Leaders

- Rotate who leads discussions, prays, or hosts, giving others ownership.

5 Celebrate Life Events

- Acknowledge birthdays, promotions, or big milestones, people feel loved when they're remembered.

6 Be Intentional with Invitations

- Include group members in your daily life when possible, grab coffee, attend events, or invite them along on errands.

A Leadership Reminder

Acts 2:46 shows believers sharing meals and life outside formal gatherings. Deep discipleship grows in those everyday spaces, look for ways to invite people into yours.



Developing Yourself as a Leader

Growing your heart, skills, and vision to lead well for the long haul

What This is About

Healthy small groups start with healthy leaders. Leadership isn't a one-time achievement; it's an ongoing process of letting God shape your character, deepen your relationship with Him, and expand your skills. Investing in yourself makes you a better shepherd, friend, and disciple-maker.

Why It Matters

- Your spiritual health sets the tone for your group (1 Timothy 4:16).
- Growing leaders multiply healthy groups and future leaders.
- Leading from overflow, rather than burnout, sustains you long-term.
- Modeling a teachable spirit inspires your group to keep growing, too.

Best Practices for Leaders

1 Prioritize Your Time with Jesus

- Make daily time in prayer, Scripture, and worship your non-negotiable foundation.

2 Learn Continuously

- Read books, listen to podcasts, and attend training, God can use these to stretch and strengthen you.

3 Seek Feedback

- Ask your group, peers, or mentors: *"How can I grow as your leader?"*

4 Invest in Relationships

- Connect with other leaders for encouragement, prayer, and sharing best practices.

5 Embrace Coaching

- Consider a mentor or small group coach who can walk with you through challenges and victories.

6 Reflect and Adjust

- After each meeting, pause and ask: *"What went well? What could be better?"*



7 Rest Well

- Sabbath, hobbies, and time with loved ones renew your energy and perspective.




A Leadership Reminder

Proverbs 27:17 says, “*As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.*” Staying sharp spiritually and relationally helps you lead from a place of strength, not striving.

Additional Resources

-  Small Group Network: *Coaching Resources*
-  [Podcast: Group Talk – Small Group Network](#)

Recommended Books

-  *Developing the Leader Within You 2.0* – [John C. Maxwell \(Amazon\)](#)
-  *Leading Small Groups with Purpose* – [Steve Gladen \(Amazon\)](#)
-  *The Emotionally Healthy Leader* – [Peter Scazzero \(Amazon\)](#)



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Leader Resources



Why Leader Resources Matters

Great leaders don't stop growing. By being lifelong learners, we stay humble, lead with wisdom, and pour into others from a place of depth. Reading trusted, biblically grounded books helps us develop our leadership, navigate group dynamics, and build spiritual rhythms, equipping us to lead like Jesus and point others to Him. See below for a list of recommend books to purchase and most if not all can also be found in audio versions.

Leadership

Developing the Leader Within You 2.0 – John C. Maxwell

Learn how to intentionally grow your leadership skills and build the habits of an effective, influential leader.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership – John C. Maxwell

Classic principles for becoming a leader others want to follow—tested across decades and cultures.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

Winning the War in Your Mind – Craig Groeschel

Learn how to break free from toxic thought patterns and develop a mindset anchored in biblical truth.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

Emotionally Healthy Leader – Pete Scazzero

Empowers leaders to develop sustainable spiritual rhythms and emotional health for long-term ministry impact.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

God-Initiated Leadership: 40 Days to Eternal Influence – Bill Elliff

A 40-day devotional journey that equips leaders to depend on God's voice and power instead of striving in their own strength, creating lasting spiritual impact.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

Group Dynamics

Leading Life-Changing Small Groups – Bill Donahue

Clear, practical guidance for leading groups where authentic relationships thrive and lives change.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

Community: Taking Your Small Group Off Life Support – Brad House

A blueprint for transforming stagnant groups into communities on mission together.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

Deep Discipleship – J.T. English

Calls churches and leaders to move beyond shallow group content to deep, transformative discipleship practices.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

Spiritual Rhythms

Practicing the Way: Be with Jesus. Become Like Him. Do as He Did. – John Mark Comer

A practical guide to living like Jesus through intentional spiritual practices—arranging your life around Him.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

Emotionally Healthy Spirituality – Pete Scazzero

Helps believers break free from the illusion of spiritual maturity while ignoring emotional health.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire: What Happens When God's Spirit Invades the Hearts of His People – Jim Cymbala

Tells the inspiring story of Brooklyn Tabernacle and shows how passionate, desperate prayer invites the power of God to transform lives, churches, and communities.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

Simply Prayer: 40 Days to a Powerful Prayer Life – Bill Elliff

A practical 40-day devotional to transform your prayer life and intimacy with God.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

Prayer with No Intermission: How to Live an Unceasing, Graceful Life of Prayer – Bill Elliff

Shows how to break free from compartmentalized prayer habits and learn to pray continuously, weaving conversation with God into every moment of your day.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

Essential Presence: How to Experience Increased Intimacy with Christ – Bill Elliff

A practical guide to cultivating a life marked by closeness with Jesus, helping you move from occasional connection to constant awareness of His presence.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

The Explicit Gospel – Matt Chandler

A clear, powerful call to keep the gospel central in every part of our lives and church communities.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

Prodigal God – Timothy Keller

A fresh look at Jesus' parable of the Prodigal Son, showing God's radical grace and invitation to relationship.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

The Ragamuffin Gospel: Good News for the Bedraggled, Beat-Up, and Burnt Out – Brennan Manning

A powerful exploration of God's radical grace, reminding us that Jesus came not for the perfect but for the broken, and inviting believers to rest in God's unconditional love.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

Grief

Gentle and Lowly – Dane Ortlund

A powerful book on learning biblical lament—giving leaders and group members a framework to process grief honestly before God while clinging to hope in His promises.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

The Seasons of Our Grief: Embracing God’s Faithfulness in Our Journey of Loss – Dr. Ray Pritchard

Offers compassionate guidance through the stages of grief, helping readers see God’s presence and faithfulness as they navigate sorrow and healing.

[Buy on Amazon](#)