

# 4 BIGGEST GROUP PROBLEMS & HOW TO SOLVE THEM

## 1. Non-Contributors

- ***Know the person's personality.*** Some people are just quiet, and that's OK.
- ***"Make room" for all to share.*** Be aware if someone is hogging the conversation, and create opportunities to bring someone different into the discussion.
- ***Affirmation and encouragement.*** When someone who is usually quiet ventures into the discussion, acknowledge and encourage it ("That's a good thought, Joe" or "I appreciate what you had to say tonight, Mary"). A little encouragement goes a long way!
- ***Create an inclusive environment.*** You might have to put the brakes on someone who overtakes the conversation. ("That's a valid point, Mark. Kathy, do you have something to add?"). Make a point of attempting to have each member share at least once per meeting, whether in discussion or prayer.
- ***Give it some time.*** Safe relationships take time. Members may need to get to know each other better in order to feel comfortable voicing their opinion or sharing about their struggles.

## 2. Side Conversations/Straying off topic

- ***Help them to direct it back to the main conversation.*** Sometimes, legitimately, other things come up. Be sensitive to that, but it might be a conversation for later. Say something like: "that's a good thought, and we should talk about it, but let's finish with this topic first."
- ***Recognize when a side conversation needs to become the main one.*** It can be apparent that what someone brings up, needs to be discussed by all. It could replace what you planned to talk about. Don't be so stuck on your own meeting agenda that you can't shelve your plans in order to minister or disciple one of your members. Beware, though, this should not happen every week!
- ***"Meanwhile, back at the cross".*** Funny, but helpful. Have a "group signal" that lets the members know you've gotten off track and need to get back to the topic at hand. Only let the rabbit trail go so far!

## 3. Insufficiently Committed Members

- ***Have a group covenant.*** When your group meets for the first time, lay out the expectations. These should include when, where and how often you'll meet. Write it up, and ask members to sign it. This makes it apparent that

you take this group seriously, and if they can't commit to the plans made, they might want to attend another group that suits them better.

- **Build accountability.** Members should contact both the leaders and host if they won't be attending the scheduled meeting.
- **Share expectations.** Make it a priority to begin and end on time (see "group covenant"); explain to the group that regular attendance enhances community.
- **Contact!** Let your members know that they are a vital part of the group, and when they don't attend, they are missed. Regular emails, calls, notes are helpful. Also, emailing the prayer requests that were made in the meeting helps those not there to keep up to speed with what's happening.
- **Do not assume to know their situation.** There are many things that could be keeping them from regular attendance. Attempt to get to the bottom of their lack of commitment without passing judgment or being offended.

#### 4. The Group Dominator

- **Acknowledge their contribution.** Affirm their desire to share, but remind them that our goal is for everyone to have a chance to share.
- **"Can we talk about this later-or privately?"** If they are straying off topic, or spending too much time on one question/comment, ask if you can defer it until later.
- **Refer to a pastor or counselor** If their conversation reveals a need that you don't feel equipped to handle, refer them. Remember, we're not here to counsel or solve problems.

I'm sure there are more topics that we could cover as it relates to group difficulties, but this should cover the most common. If you find that there is something specific that keeps coming up in your group, feel free to contact Pastor Mike or Cindy for help.