

Shutting the Back Door - Retaining Members

How do you get members to remain consistent? How do you ensure visitors stick? Here are some practical steps on how to close the back door in your small group!

Relationships Need to Happen *Outside* of Small Group

- **It's more than once a week.** The irony of small group retention is that the battle is won and lost *outside of your small group meeting*. There must be interaction on the days and nights that your small group doesn't meet. That is how you are going to maintain members and get them to feel like they are part of the core.
 - Even something as simple as a phone call, text message, or email can communicate care and concern for your small group members.
- **Acts 2:46 - Live life together!** Have members over for dinner, sit together on Sunday mornings, watch Gator games as a small group, go rock climbing together, have spontaneous worship nights... whatever you do – bring them along! This makes your small group more than just another weekly church service that they attend but instead a community where they feel they belong and want to be a part of.
- **Prioritize One on Ones.** This is something that is very intentional and very easy to do but means the world to your small group members. Take the time to invite them into your life in a personal way: share a meal, share a devotional time, even run errands together! "Wasting time" together is a key principle because this is where most discipleship will naturally take place! You are a spiritual father or mother, and children like nothing more than personal time with their parents!
- Some of Jesus' greatest moments with His disciples were not in formal settings but social ones: At a wedding (John 2:1-10), a dinner party (Luke 5:29-32), on a boat ride (Luke 8:22-25), and on a walk (Luke 24:13-27) to give a few examples.

Faithfulness is the Key.

- **Your charisma only takes you so far.** Most people scoff at the idea of administrative duties and write it off as unimportant or a necessary evil, but administration can be the key to developing and maintain a thriving small group. In fact, it is a spiritual gift (1st Corinthians 12:28). You may have the biggest small group around, but that means nothing if there is no consistency and people are simply filing in and then filing right back out!

Here are three acts of faithfulness that will significantly help people stick in small group:

- 1. Keep attendance weekly.** Write down who is and who isn't at small group on a weekly basis. This is so important, especially if your small group has more than 8 people. Sometimes, you may not even notice Frank isn't there until three weeks of him not coming, and then it's too late! Even something as simple as an excel sheet that you keep updated week to week will do.
 - **Note:** *We are creating an online attendance system that will do this for you! It will be up and running in the next month or two. More to come!*
- 2. Follow-Up!** Look and see who is there and who is not. If someone missed this week, *contact them the next day* with a call, text, or email... just do something! When you take the time to contact your members, it shows them you care enough to take the time to get in touch with them. It says you care enough to see why they were absent from small group. This goes such a long way in someone's life to know that they are missed and that they are loved.
- 3. Keep track of newbies!** Did someone visit your small group? Make it easy for them to feel accepted and welcomed! Follow up with them the day after small group. Let them know you were excited they came and that they are welcome back anytime.

It's a Team Effort

- **Maintaining members is a team effort.** Cast vision with your small group about being a small group who really lives life together. Make it a goal for everyone to have a one on one with someone else from small group every week, every two weeks, or whatever you feel led to do. Make sure community is happening outside of your meeting time and that it doesn't always have to revolve around you. Encourage one on ones between group members with you, the leader, not there!
- **Get your apprentice involved.** You are supposed to be teaching them how to be an effective small group leader, and maintaining members is most certainly part of that! Have them assist you with follow-up calls, meeting up with visitors, and any other administrative tasks that you may need assistance with.
- **Make it Hard to Say No!** You want visitors to stick? Go the extra mile and get you, your apprentice, or someone in your small group to meet up with them before your next small group. Invite them into life outside of your small group meeting. If you already have a small group that is committed to meeting together outside of small group, then this will be a natural outflow of what is already going on.