

The Art of Letting Go

What do you do about someone who comes and visits your small group but never comes back? When do you stop trying to track them down? What do you do when people leave your small group to go to another one? There is no set formula to this: it truly is an art since every situation requires a different approach. Nevertheless, let's take a look at some tips that can help you along the way...

Be Faithful, Not Forceful

- **If someone comes to visit your small group, follow up with them.** It is important for a newcomer to know that you noticed them and were excited they were there and that they weren't "just another person." When you have a visitor, make sure you get their name and some form of contact info to keep in touch. Send them a "thanks for coming" email or a phone call within the next few days.
- **Don't overdue it.** Don't stalk new people or be overbearing! Invite them once or twice during the week, not fifty times. One great way to help them feel comfortable and to casually incorporate them into your group is by inviting them to dinner or to hang out with some members of your group outside of your official small group time. Let them get to know everyone in a more relaxed setting.
- **But what if they don't come back?** There are times when someone will visit but not come back the next week. Invite them back to your small group each week for three weeks following their first visit. If after three weeks they still do not return, then consider your duty done in regards to faithfully pursuing them. Here are some questions you can ask to help figure out if another group might fit them better:
 - How well do you feel you are connecting with others at small group?
 - Do you think this small group is a good fit for you?
 - If they do not show a willingness to come back, then joyfully redirect them to another small group. Make the extra effort to ensure they are getting disciplined in another small group.
- **Don't waste your time if they are not ready.** Three weeks shows you made the effort, but if they aren't ready to commit, then let it go. Invest your energy into your small group members who *are* coming, not in those who don't show up!

It's Not About You – It's About Discipleship

- **What if they go to another small group?** As a leader, you *must* be okay with this and not take it personally. Some people fit better with other group dynamics or will grow much faster with another leader because they relate better. Whatever the case may be, do not blame the person who left or the leader they went to, even if the member leaving has been going to your group for awhile. Also, don't blame yourself! Just because someone may feel more comfortable at another group is not a knock on your leadership abilities or your ability to make disciples!
 - With that being said, don't intentionally "sheep steal" from other small groups. We have too many people *not* plugged in to have two small group leaders fighting about someone already plugged into a small group!
- **See the situation through the lens of discipleship, not personal feelings.** If someone is getting better disciplined somewhere else, then isn't that where you want them to be? Sometimes this may be hard for us because we have personal relationships with people, but we have to think beyond ourselves and look at the bigger picture of discipleship. Again, focus on the people who are faithfully coming and desiring to grow under your leadership.
 - If you are having a hard time looking through the lens of discipleship and you need to talk to someone about this and to help you process this, do not go to fellow small group members or leaders. Go to your coach or coordinator and talk it through with them.
- **Always build up your fellow small group leaders, never tear them down.** If someone is looking for another small group, champion your fellow small group leaders. Tell them how amazing the group they are checking out other than yours is, how great the leader is, and build up the body of Christ. Nothing is worse or less appealing to the Kingdom than a bitter leader harping and talking bad about a fellow co-laborer in Christ... don't be that guy!
- **Read Colossians 3:1-4, go win souls, and make disciples.** This is what we are about. If you keep that in mind, then you won't be bothered by the small handful of people who are trying to find the right group. Keep your eyes on Jesus, winning souls, and making disciples will keep you from getting hung up on worrying about one or two people who went to another small group.