

## PURPOSE AND GUIDELINES FOR DISCIPLESHIP GROUPS

Discipleship groups are a place to grow and develop in our faith. Each group should have 3-4 teenagers and one disciple who, using the experience of their own faith journey and the bible, steer conversation, encourage each other in their journey and create a space to share and develop a culture of being a follower of Jesus.

When starting the group it is important to establish an agreement of expectations and how the relationships will work. It is good to remember that this is not a place for counselling or putting across extreme faith opinions, but it is a space to love, listen and establish the biblical and life forming principles. The best way of ensuring this and avoiding potential misunderstandings is to complete an agreement which will establish the ground rules for the relationship.

For this you might want to discuss some (or all) of the following:

- Confidentiality - Agree as a group that you will not disclose to anyone else what you discuss during meetings unless with their agreement, or unless you deem them at risk and then you will discuss with your wider mentor team and find a way to proceed.
- Frequency, timing and location of meetings – Agree with the group how often and how long you will meet. I would suggest weekly, in a coffee shop and for no longer than 90 mins.
- Length of the relationship - Agree when the relationship will end: I would suggest having an agreement for one academic year and then you can reassess after that. If both parties are happy with it you can always extend the relationship.
- Contact arrangements - Discuss how and when to get in touch. You can use Facebook messenger or Whatsapp and always have a secondary leader (not a spouse) as part of each group for accountability.
- Goals/Aims - Agree a common purpose and goals that will direct the relationship. Discuss expectations and identify potential issues. This is a discipleship process so faith, life, honesty, and openness are key fundamentals for the groups.
- Honesty - Open and honest communication is important for a discipleship relationship. Discuss with the group the desire to have an open forum but also lay some boundaries to keep everyone safe in what they are sharing, and the potential consequences of sharing sensitive information.
- Privacy - It is important to agree what you are prepared to talk about other than the agreed material, in order not to overstep any boundaries. And be aware of what you are sharing about yourself and the appropriateness of this.
- Accountability - Discussing how the rest of the mentor group will be involved and potential information you may need to pass to that group for the protection of the teenagers and your relationship.

- Endings - Discuss ways to end the relationship that are comfortable for the group at the very beginning. This makes it easier at the end.

You may find it useful to write down what is agreed so it can be referred to if necessary.

Ending a discipleship relationship

If the agreed time for the group has come to an end or you think the time has come for the relationship to end, tell your group and wider team. If you are unsure whether you should continue, discuss the question. It is important to discuss from the beginning how you will end the relationship.

There can be a variety of reason for ending the relationship:

You have come to the end of your agreed time.

The group dynamic is not working, or it is becoming hard to form positive relationships.

A change of priorities or commitments. To avoid awkwardness at the end discuss at the beginning how you will end the relationship, e.g. how will you let the group know that they think it is time to end the relationship. At the end of the relationship, look back over the time and discuss with your wider team what went well and what you might do differently another time.