

SEMESTER GROUPS

Tips for Effective Group Meetings

6-8 WEEKS. ONE MEANINGFUL OPPORTUNITY.

Semester Groups meet on campus at Wellspring Church for 6-8 weeks. Every gathering is an opportunity to help people feel welcomed, build relationships, grow spiritually, and take their next step.

BEFORE GROUP

01 A Warm Welcome: Create a Safe & Inviting Space

For some people, simply walking into a group where they do not know anyone is a big step. Help every person feel seen and included from the moment they arrive.

- Be in your room and ready before group members arrive.
- Have someone near the entrance welcoming people as they come in.
- Introduce yourself and help group members meet one another.
- Have another leader or group member inside the room engaging people in conversation.
- Let your posture, eye contact, and tone communicate: "You belong here."

Those first few minutes can set the tone for the entire semester.

02 Create Space for Connection

Because you only have a few weeks together, use the time before group begins to help relationships form.

- Encourage casual conversation as people arrive.
- Introduce people who may have something in common.
- If appropriate, simple snacks or drinks can help create a relaxed environment.
- Pay special attention to anyone attending for the first time or coming alone.

People may come for the topic or curriculum, but relationships are often what keep them coming back.

DURING GROUP

03 Start Strong: Set the Tone

Intentionally transition the room from casual conversation into the group experience.

- Begin with a simple icebreaker or question that gets everyone talking.
- Whenever possible, connect the question to that evening's topic.
- Keep it light, relevant, and easy for everyone to answer.

Example: "When was a time you had to rely on someone unexpectedly?"

04 Guide the Main Content

Your curriculum gives direction. Your role is to help create meaningful conversation around it.

- Come prepared and familiar with the week's material.
- Guide the conversation rather than doing all the talking.
- Avoid unnecessary rabbit trails, but stay sensitive to what people are experiencing.
- Be flexible when a meaningful conversation develops.

You do not have to cover every question. Connection and spiritual growth matter more than finishing every page.

05 Encourage Everyone to Participate

Healthy groups are not dominated by one or two voices. Create room for everyone to engage.

- Ask open-ended questions and give people time to think.
- Gently invite quieter members into the conversation without putting them on the spot.
- Redirect graciously when one person begins dominating the discussion.
- Try questions like "What stood out to you?" or "How could this apply to your life this week?"

The goal is not the "right answer." The goal is to help people process, learn, and grow together.

DURING GROUP - CONTINUED

06 Handle Prayer Requests With Care

Prayer is an important part of every Semester Group. Treat what is shared with care and confidentiality.

- Give people an opportunity to share prayer needs.
- Write requests down when helpful so you can follow up.
- Leave enough time to actually pray - not just collect requests.
- Invite others to participate without creating pressure.
- Follow up during the week when someone shares something significant.

People should leave knowing they were heard, cared for, and prayed for.

ENDING WELL

07 Wrap Up With Clarity & Care

Because Semester Groups only meet for 6-8 weeks, every gathering matters.

- Remind everyone of the next meeting date.
- Share anything they need to read, watch, or prepare before the next session.
- Communicate important Wellspring opportunities when appropriate.
- Encourage everyone to return the following week.
- Send a group text or follow-up during the week when helpful.

08 Leave People Encouraged

Before everyone leaves, thank them for being part of the group. Affirm participation and celebrate growth.

- Notice and encourage new or quieter members.
- Celebrate steps of faith, connection, and consistency.
- Use simple words of affirmation to let people know their presence matters.

“Thank you for sharing tonight. I’m really glad you’re part of this group.”

EVERY WEEK

09 Consistency Is Key

- Begin and end on time.
- Be prepared each week and create a welcoming environment before people arrive.
- Stay connected with group members between meetings.
- If someone misses a week, reach out and let them know they were missed.

Every week is another opportunity to build trust and deepen relationships.

10 The Little Things Matter

- Make sure your room is clean, comfortable, and ready.
- Arrange seating so conversation feels natural and everyone can easily see and hear.
- Have curriculum and supplies ready before people arrive.
- Consider background music while people enter.

Small details communicate: “We were expecting you, and we’re glad you’re here.”

FINAL THOUGHT

Be prepared. Be present. Love people well.

Semester Groups may only last 6-8 weeks, but God can use those weeks to create relationships, deepen faith, and help someone take a significant next step. Make every week count.