

## How to Keep Your Small Group Small Rewritten by Bob Young, original source unknown

*[Note: “tongue-in-cheek” warning!]*

Ideally, small groups are opportunities for focused spiritual conversations that promote faith and transformation. Sometimes the opposite happens. Here are 15 (more or less) ideas to help you miss the small groups boat, demotivate your group, and keep your group small!

- Be unclear about the purpose of the group. Never suggest that the group might function in evangelism, discipleship, fellowship, assimilation, or outreach. Pretend that everyone already knows what small groups are about!
- Be unclear about expectations and commitment in the group. Set the bar low for expectations and commitments. Do not expect group members to attend regularly, and be sure to make clear that you expect the group to grow in spiritual depth quickly.
- Keep people guessing by not creating a rhythm of meeting days and times. Avoid weekly meetings because it is too hard for people to meet, debrief and recalibrate their lives. After all, how much life can happen in just a week? Be sure to use a different meeting place each time so people will not know where to meet. Make clear that it is easier “not to bring some things up”—to save time in explaining the background of life situations and events. It is easier to keep things to ourselves. Be in a hurry to finish.
- Do not meet or communicate outside of the meetings through social media or informal contacts. Avoid having fun together. Avoid invitations to attend events together (ball games, movies, camping trips) since Christians are not allowed to enjoy life. Most people are too busy for these activities anyway.
- Do not spend much time in the group studying the Bible. Use other tools, share “insights,” let everyone say whatever they want to say without grounding the study in Scripture.
- Be unprepared. Do not give any homework so you can show your group how much you know while belittling them for their lack of biblical knowledge. Related to the previous point, minimize the time spent in Bible study. Focus on the world, not the Word. There are more interesting subjects to discuss—sports teams, culinary experiences, and vacation plans. Talk more and listen less.
- Make sure you get through any assigned material and questions, even when people want to talk, share, and participate. Make the group mentally-focused rather than relational.
- Do not expect the group members to care for one another or for others. Do not take time for conversations about needs.
- Avoid opportunities to care for one another. People want to be left alone to fend for themselves. Encourage members to keep honest thoughts to themselves. Other people cannot really help with such situations.
- Share as little time as possible together.
- Share as few meals together as possible. These extended times only lead to comfortable conversations and unnecessary debriefing of life stories.
- Keep people pumped up so there is no depth to the group. Keep people pushed down so there is no hope in the group. Assure people that they are the only ones who have a sin problem (or a sin problem as great as theirs). Remind them that only those who have their lives together will fit in and there is no room for struggles, shortcomings, conflicts, weaknesses, or doubts.
- Avoid sharing prayer concerns or praises. People are not interested in the needs of others. People are more interested in bringing their own needs before God, not the needs of others.
- Close your group to anyone else who might want to join, especially someone who would require investment and attention because they are new believers.
- Do not help the group share grace through prayer, Bible reading and study, worship, and silence and solitude, and definitely do not reflect on these together as a group.
- There is no need to celebrate small or large victories and life accomplishments of group members. People do not want attention brought to themselves.
- Decline any opportunity to serve the larger community. Convince your group there are no real benefits in serving together.