

Community-Builders

No matter how strong a scripture study we have, if we don't take time to get to know and love our small group friends, our gatherings will be fruitless. (1 Corinthians 13:1-3) What do we each value most? How do we spend our free time? How are things going with the rest of the family? What are we bringing with us into our time together? Ice-breaker, or community-builder, activities are a great way to create a relaxed, fun environment where we can learn more about each other.

A few tips for using community-builders:

- Resist the urge to do the same thing every week; keeping things fresh brings in people's focus.
- Don't be afraid to abandon the study altogether one week if it seems like more time is needed to learn about and care for each other. (Also, be sure not to neglect scripture study in future weeks.)
- It's not a requirement to do a community-builder at each meeting.
- In the first couple of meetings, do community-builders that are a bit lighter and more fun. After you have met for a few weeks and know each other better, you can start doing some that dig a little deeper into their lives.
- If you're using ice-breakers be sure that they aren't "ice-makers" (something that will actually make people not want to open up).
- If you have a larger group, try doing these activities in pairs or smaller groups.

Highs and Lows

Have each person share their best and worst moments from the previous week. Try to steer the group away from work items. This icebreaker is an easy one to use at first and gives you good feedback concerning their life at the moment. Some veteran groups do this several times a year ... the answers become more honest as you go.

Deserted Island

Ask, "You've been exiled to a deserted island for a year. You are told you may take three things you want, apart from the essentials. What would you take and why?" (Maybe take "Bible" out of the equation in this version.) Write the three things down and turn them into the leader. The leader will read them and you'll try to guess who wrote them.

Two Truths and a Lie

Have each person make three statements about themselves: two true statements and one lie. For example, "I've never broken a bone. I have five sisters. I was born in Yugoslavia." The group tries to guess which statement is the lie.

My Life in Pictures

Bring a newspaper or magazine. Have each person tear out a picture, article or anything they think tells something about him/herself. If there's enough time they can make a collage that tells more about themselves.

Story Cards

<https://store.northpoint.org/products/story-cards> Lay out these images on the table/ground and give the group a prompt, such as “Which image best represents your relationship with God right now? Why?” or “Which of these images describes your day today?”

Personal Scavenger Hunt

Take five minutes and find the following items in your wallet or purse: Something that ...
you've had a long time.
you're proud of.
reveals a lot about you.
reminds you of a fun time.
concerns or worries you.

Have each person share the first item. Go around again on the second item, and again until you have gone through each one. Don't feel like you have to use the whole list because it will take too long.

M&M's Game

Pass a bag of M&M's around and tell everyone to take a few. Then, before they eat them, ask everyone to share something for every M&M. For example, something about their family for every red one, something about their plans for the future for every green one, etc.

Did You Know?

Find interesting facts about individual group members before the group meets. Try to discover information that sets each person apart from the others, such as "I have a tugboat named after me" or "I once wrecked the same quarter panel of my car four times" or "I have a twin."

Then make a sheet with one fact from each person and a blank beside this fact. Give everyone in the group a sheet and five to seven minutes to find who goes in each blank. When they find the right person they must also learn one other fact about that person. At the end, introduce everyone in the group in the order on the list.

A simplified version of this community-builder is to have each person write down on a sheet of paper something unique about themselves. Indicate that it doesn't have to be something embarrassing. Then collect all of them, read one at a time, and have them guess who it is. They can then explain more about it if they want.

Objects of Value

Ask each person to come to the meeting with an object that represents something important to them. A mug from a camping trip... old ballet shoes... a daughter's hairbow... a piece of artwork you created. Everyone has a chance to explain why this object holds value for them.

Get To Know You Questions

1. What do you do for fun?
2. How many pets do you have?
3. Who is someone very important to you? What do you like about this person?
4. How long have you lived in (name of town)?
5. Do you play any instruments? If yes, what?
6. What is your main job during the week?
7. What would be your ideal vacation?
8. What is the most memorable activity you did with your family as a child?
9. What quality do you appreciate most in a friend?
10. If you could go anywhere in the world, where would you go and why?
11. If you could talk to anyone in the world, who would it be? Why?
12. If you could talk to any person who has died, who would you talk to and why?
13. If you could wish one thing to come true about your upcoming summer, what would it be?
14. What is your favorite Sunday afternoon pastime? Why?
15. What hobby did you enjoy most in your teen years?
16. What is the one thing that gives you the most satisfaction?
17. What is one thing you are good at doing?
18. Who is the most influential person in your life today?
19. When you are (pick an applicable age), what do you hope to be doing?
20. Describe your ideal house and how you would furnish it.
21. Tell us about the first job you ever had.

These questions can be spread out over time where everyone answers one and then use another question another week or you can put them in a hat and people answer the one they pick.

“Digging Deeper” Activities **For groups who know each other well and/or** **want to devote more time to hearing each other’s stories**

Get To Know You Questions

1. What is one characteristic you received from you parents that you want to keep, and one you wish you could change?
2. If you knew you couldn't fail and money was no object, what would you like to do in the next five years?
3. What would you like said at your funeral?
4. When, if ever, did God become more than a word to you, and how did it happen?

Chart Your Life

Thinking back as far as you can, draw a line graph to represent your life. Consider the high points, the low points, moments of inspiration, moments of despair, leveling off times, and where you are now. The

line will probably be a mixture of straight, slanted, jagged and curved lines. After you've drawn it, share what it means to you with the group.

Spiritual Autobiographies

See the explanation at www.grace.org/lcleaders for how to prepare group members to share their spiritual autobiographies with each other. This exercise needs a lot of time – devote 30 minutes each week to one person's story.

You Write the Questions

Give each person a 3x5 card. You pick the topic and let them write the questions. For example, you choose "friendship" as a topic, and they each write out a question for anyone in the group to answer about friendship. "What do you value most in a friend?" "Who was your best friend growing up? Why?"

Then pile all the cards face-down in the middle of the group and let people draw.

Topic ideas: jobs, life goals, funny stories, hobbies, family, fears, dating issues, significant relationships, relationship with God, etc.