

WHAT IS OPEN & INVITATIONAL?

Most groups begin and continue to thrive because an invitation is extended to those who are in your life, but not at group yet. Being invitational, saying come with me, is a way to live out the priority of making disciples who make disciples. An open and invitational group is one that is seeing others that need Jesus and need a place to connect with Him.

An invitational group starts with leaders who care about inviting others. People will catch your attitude and example. You set a tone for your whole group. Your group is here to help people pursue God and mature in their faith. If a group is learning to make disciples who make disciples, that means engaging and incorporating people who aren't yet a part of the group.

There is something exciting about an invitational group! You're always anticipating the next thing God will do in the lives of people you've been reaching out to. But it won't happen unless the group leadership owns the vision for this and is intentional about putting it into practice.

What could it look like to own and practice being open and invitational?

- Talk about being open and invitational in your group. Examine your hearts. Do you really want new people to be added to your group? If so, why? If not, why not?
- Take some of the group's meeting time to talk about people in your lives who might be open to an invitation. Help people think about their circles of connection and influence.
- Spend time as a group praying by name for people you would like to start coming to the group. Pray also for unnamed people in whom the Holy Spirit might be working to draw them toward Jesus.
- Every so often, hold a simple event that opens the doors of the group. Certain times in the year lend themselves to an invitational event, such as a summer BBQ, or a holiday party. Make it an event that is easy to organize, easy for your members to invite people to, and easy for a newcomer to say "Yes" to.
- People may not be used to inviting, so help them know how. You're not inviting someone to make a long-term commitment to a group. You're inviting them to come to the cook-out one time to meet your friends. Then you can invite them to come back when the group has an ordinary meeting. Or you're inviting them to check out the new series you're about to start.

- If you expect people to come, you will arrange for practical things like back-up seating and plenty of print-outs. Help your group think about how to welcome newcomers and make them feel at home.
- Know that it takes time to develop an invitational culture. Not everyone you invite will respond right away and it may take many invitations to find people who will stay with your group. If you keep pursuing people over time, your group will grow.

A healthy group is intentional about inviting others to join.