

Making Your Small Group More Newcomer Friendly

Imagine that you're new to church. Maybe you're exploring Christianity and interested in finding out about Jesus. Somebody invites you to their 'small group' and when you get there you find eleven people singing songs in the lounge with their eyes closed. Pretty weird, right?

This guide is designed to help you make your small group more accessible to those who are new to church.

1. Be friendly

Welcome newcomers at the door (and make sure you smile). People will feel at ease knowing whose house they are in and who is leading the group.

Encourage the rest of your group to be friendly too. Ask questions and engage newcomers in conversation.

2. Think about language

Be aware that some of the words you're using will need to be explained. Speak at small group like you would the rest of the week, but be sensitive that your newest member might have no experience of church or the Bible. Even a phrase like 'small group' may need to be defined.

3. Think about hospitality

Think about lighting, seating, appropriate music, drinks and snacks. Your aim is to make people feel at home. If they're relaxed, they're more likely to engage with you and the other members, and they're more likely to want to return.

4. Respect boundaries

It can take a while to get used to sharing in groups, being vulnerable, praying with others, etc., so make it clear that there's no pressure on new members to do anything they don't want to do.

Having said that, allow newcomers to share, to offer opinions and to try praying (as much as is appropriate).

5. Explain anything unusual – but be yourselves!

It can help put people at ease if you lay out the structure of the evening at the start. Explain what you're going to do, and why.

You may need to explain what worship is all about, or the reason that people are praying for healing or speaking in tongues. Don't hype any of these things up, but don't cut them out of your group either.

Be sensitive to new people but carry on doing the things you'd normally do – this is what makes you distinctive and can be really powerful for a newcomer.