

Tips for Co-Leaders: Getting the Most Value

You probably recognize the value in connecting and building relationships within your group. It's a primary reason for starting and leading a group! Have you ever thought about your relationship with your co-leader as another "small group" with all the same benefits and maybe more—getting to know one another; building from one another's gifts; sharing the fun and the work with another person; learning from another person's perspectives and observations. As another "small group" your relationship is definitely worth tending to and investing in.

Keys to a Valuable Partnership

Build your relationship. Take time to get to know one another and to pray for one another, just as you would do in your small group. By creating this connection, you'll look forward to talking and planning together. Your experience will be much richer.

Affirm one another. We all appreciate knowing what we're good at, but sometimes it's not obvious to us (we assume everyone does it just as well!). Tell your co-leader what they do well and what you appreciate about their leadership. It's good for building relationships and for discerning where God is using us in doing ministry.

Learning moments. Watch for things you'd like to learn from your co-leader and pay attention to what they do or how they navigate the group.

Connect between gatherings. Be intentional about scheduling a time to talk. It's best to debrief for a short time after the gathering and connect later to prepare for the next gathering, if possible. Typically, there is "front-end" and "back-end" work. Talk through what you are noticing about the relationships between group members and how the group is doing with the faith study.

Keep the time manageable. While it's best to talk and plan together, strive for a balance that makes leading your group do-able and manage-able for both of you. You can talk things through over the phone or perhaps meet every other gathering, if time is critical.

Look for common interests and comfort levels. When making decisions about the group, be sure that you are both comfortable with the direction the group is taking. This is true with deciding on a service project, making a change in the schedule, selecting resources, etc. Both leaders need to be eager about the direction of the group and comfortable with their role.

Build from gifts, but don't be limited by current skills. Everyone has a unique gift package and set of experiences. Co-leaders can benefit from this by "playing to their strengths" and sometimes taking on certain roles. On the other hand, this is also a good place to stretch and try new skills. You may want to change up what you are doing over time or at least talk it over periodically.

Who does what? Be sure to talk and be clear about "who does what" for both individual sessions and for the overall group process. Don't be afraid to take the initiative and get the conversation going!

Some co-leaders divide up the leadership of an individual session. Other co-leaders rotate leadership between sessions. It's helpful if both leaders review the faith study ahead of time to help jump-start the conversation. A co-leader can also help bring a conversation back on track and manage the time.

You may need to revisit "who does what" as you move to a new resource, with a different format. You will also want to decide who takes care of logistics, administrative details, and on-going contact with the group? Both people have valuable parts to plan in both planning and leading!

Reflect. Talk through the "reflecting on your group outline" together (below). Are you seeing the same things or does your co-leader bring up something new? What are some ways to encourage the group to grow deeper in faith or in their relationships? You might plan to do this every 3-6 months to track the group's progress and look ahead to future events and decisions.

Find a strategy that works for you. Leaders have found many different ways to work together and to facilitate a group together. There is no one "right" way. Talk about what works best for you.

What's Great about Having a Partner?

1. **Life happens.** Work gets crazy, family concerns come up, you catch a cold or the flu. A co-leader gives you a great plan b for those times when it is most needed.
2. **More eyes and ears.** Your observations of the group, together, will be far more than what you can see or hear on your own. Your co-leader is in a different location and sees the members differently. A co-leader can watch, listen, and pay attention while the other co-leader is focused on "what's next?"
3. **Learning opportunity.** Another leader has had a fresh, new way of facilitating and this is a chance to learn from them, strengthening skills and offering new experiences. Watch for that opportunity!
4. **It's fun.** You get to know someone in a new, different way. You get to share the joys and laughter together. You have a partner in working through any challenges.

Questions for Individual Reflection

1. What are the gifts your co-leader brings to the group? What is your co-leader really good at? Find a way to tell them! What have you learned from watching or working with your co-leader?
2. What are the gifts that you to bring to the group? How would your co-leader answer that question? What about other group members?

3. What is something you'd like to practice or learn about? (praying in a group, preparing devotions, managing the time, asking questions...) A partner can create a safe place to try out or build new skills.
4. What has been good about the way you are currently planning for meetings and de-briefing? What could make it stronger?
5. Who else in your group has leadership skills and could be encouraged to lead in the future (a new group or your group if there is a need)?

Questions for Reflecting Together (see next page)

Small Group Leaders: Reflecting on Your Group's Gathering

Here is a guide to step back and reflect a gathering of your group. This guide can also be a starting place for a conversation between a leader and a spiritual friend/mentor.

Today's Date:

1—Connecting

What is something new that you learned about the members of your group (as individuals)? (See if you can name something for each person or for several of the group members). Who seems most connected with the group? Who would you like to draw in?

2—Sharing

When did it seem like there was the most energy in the room? Is there anything to learn from that? What were the insights or stories that seemed the most valuable to group members? How do those comments relate to or add to the theme of your faith study or resource?

3—Leading

What is one gift that you added to the group at this gathering? Is there anywhere else in your life that this gift can be or is valuable? Did you learn anything new about yourself as a leader? How is this valuable for the group or in other places?

4—Connecting with God

Did you sense God's presence with the group or with individual group members in any way—during the session or between group sessions?

5—Looking Ahead

What do you want to remember for the next time you meet? What is one thing you'd like to focus on (or one area to grow in) at your next gathering? Is there anything for follow-up before your next session?