

# Making the Most of Short-Term Groups: Breakout Session

In this session we will discuss how to make meaningful connections in a short period of time, inspiring people to take next steps.

Short-Term Groups are a strategically designed environment. We created it because we recognized the difficulty that some people were having in making the jump directly from our Weekend Services to our Community Groups. The primary issue creating resistance was the level of commitment required. Another finding was the infrequency of our Community Group onramp event; GroupLink. Often an individual would be ready to take a step into community at Journey and find themselves having to wait several months for the next opportunity. This often resulted in the loss of personal momentum and suspension of movement. This is not acceptable for us. Thus the creation and development of Short-Term Groups.

## Short-Term Group Definition

Short-Term Groups are similar to Community Groups, but meet weekly for a short time period to explore one topic, such as marriage, parenting, finances, or spiritual growth. Short-Term Groups typically have 16-20 people.

## Benefit of a Short-Term Group

Short-Term Groups provide an easy step into community for people who are not ready to commit to a long-term, in-home group for 18-24 months.

## Challenges of a Short-Term Group

- No Commitment to returning. Week 1 of STG we consider each person a first time attender, not a group member
- Possible low comfort level for personal sharing
- Missing Weeks - When a participant misses one, it's easy to not come back
- Location - room isn't as appealing as being in someone's living room

## Best Practices to Help With the Challenges

These tools are useful in all of our short-term group environments from Starting Point and Short-Term Groups all the way to starter Community Groups.

- **Know your audience** - Generally participants in a STG are not the most well connected people in our church. There may be some common reasons why. Keep in mind what a first time attender may be bringing to the table, and be sensitive to their needs.
- **Begin each week with Mixers** - Fun games/questions to get people relating to one another. When they relate with each other they feel more comfortable in the environment, they become more invested in the other group members, and are more likely to engage in the following discussions.
- **Thank each person for sharing** - It is important to encourage participation and acknowledge the risk and investment made when someone does.
- **Appreciate their perspective** - Our win is not to beam each group participant from where they are directly to perfect doctrine. (We're not even qualified to do that.) Rather our Win is to get them exploring their faith while connecting with others. Creating a culture of curiosity and respect for others is a great way to foster that BIG WIN!
- **Highlight other participants** - This demonstrates value for the group engagement, not just the facilitator's role. It may encourage others to lean in bit more. (relate with them)
- **Homework** - Take Home questions to think about during the week
- **Communication** - Reach-out and connect with the members of the group in between sessions, via group and/or personal email, text, phone calls or even coffee invitations! Invite a group member to sit with you at church this week!