

## Provide Care

Do you make it a priority to encourage your group members to care for one another?

The way groups support spiritual growth is to provide accountability, belonging, and care to each member. So, if we want every group to provide accountability, belonging, and care, why do we call out care as its own leader essential? Well, people connected in authentic community naturally care for one another. They do it almost unconsciously, but caring for one another is not the same thing as providing care. We want you to foster caring environments in your group, but we also want you to take the lead in providing care when members of your group experience pain or difficulty.

At its most basic level providing care means staying aware of what's going on in group member's lives. That can be as simple as remembering birthdays and anniversaries and making time to acknowledge and celebrate them. Or following up on prayer requests and other significant events. So for example, asking a group member about how that meeting at work turned out after he or she expressed concern about it the previous week. It communicates you care enough to remember what's going on in other's lives and to close the loop by asking for updates.

Providing care also means being first responders when circumstances are rough, it may be as simple as offering to babysit a couple's children for a weekend so they can focus on their marriage. Or maybe it's changing your plans so you can attend an out of town funeral in order to be there for a group member that has lost someone close. It can even be setting up a calendar to provide meals for a group member's illness or after the birth of a baby.

We want you to take the lead, but it doesn't mean that you are solely responsible for providing care. Someone in the group may be better at it. They may love to serve others, they



may have more time available. It's important that you lean into the group and delegate as much as you can.

There are levels of care that go beyond the capacity of a group to handle, so a group isn't a 12 step program, a support group, or professional counselor. You aren't equipped to navigate issues like addiction, divorce, serious financial problems or a group member struggling to grieve a traumatic loss. It's important to know your limits, there's a difference between providing care and becoming a caretaker. At a certain point the way you can best care for a group member is by helping him or her connect with a church staff member, who can provide deeper pastoral care or get that group member in contact with a professional counselor.

**Take a minute to think about your group right now, does someone need to know you care?** Is a group member in the middle of a pivotal circumstance, like a job change, or a family member who is sick or maybe even dying? If so, how can you be there for that person? How can you engage the other members of your group to begin to provide care for the person in need of it? It's one of the primary ways we're privileged to demonstrate Christ's love for people who we're sharing life with.

