

## Hosting With Excellence

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The most important ministry a host can accomplish is to help people feel completely welcomed and wanted. Hosts are likely to be the first people with whom newcomers come in contact, so they have a tremendous opportunity to initiate an atmosphere of love and acceptance to all who walk through their doors. Hosting a small group is an honor, and it should be done with a commitment to excellence.

With the preceding in mind, consider the following tips for hosting a small group.

- 1. Be prepared.** The first task of a host is to greet people when they come to the door. newcomers are often the first to arrive. Their first impression of a group is critical. An excellent host will be ready well in advance of the starting time to greet people as they arrive.
- 2. Greet everyone warmly.** People come to a small group with any number of things on their mind. Some come from work. Others rushed out of the house scarfing down a sandwich. A warm greeting from the host can help people shift into a small group setting. An encouraging word can set the tone for an enjoyable evening.
- 3. Strike up a conversation.** This is especially important for new people. Ask a few questions: "Where do you live?" "How did you hear about the small group?" "How is your week going?"
- 4. Be sure you are well supplied.** Check to be sure you have plenty of pencils, paper, Bibles, study guides, and so forth. Always have an extra chair or two. Running out of supplies could send a message that there isn't enough room for someone.
- 5. Pay attention to the details.** The following may seem a bit trivial, but careful attention to them will display an extra concern for your group members.
  - *Arrange for the seating to be at the same level.* Try not to have some people sitting on the floor and others on the couch. People sitting at different levels cuts down on eye contact, diminishing discussion.
  - *Don't forget the munchies!* Food is a great catalyst for community-building. Plan to have light snacks or dessert following your Bible discussion. A great way to involve more people is to have a sign-up sheet for people to bring snacks.
  - *Check the lighting.* Be sure the room where the Bible discussion is to be held is well lit. One way to check this is to arrange the seating for the evening, turn on the lights to be used, take your Bible to the various sections of the room and see if you can read easily.
  - *Adjust the temperature.* A room that is too cold can make it very difficult for people to get comfortable. They will be less likely to linger for fellowship. A room that is too hot can cause people to tire easily.

- *Eliminate distractions.* Put your pets (especially dogs and cats) in a separate room for the evening. Let the answering machine pick up your calls, and secure a babysitter to watch the children.