



CUMBRIA
CHRISTIAN
LEARNING

Growing disciples for mission

RUNNING SMALL GROUPS



HOW DO YOU LEAD A SESSION ON A COURSE?

Group leaders need to be good leaders not expert theologians. Your role is to facilitate conversations, create a space where others can talk, often about very personal and important things. We need to be open to many questions, to different views and perspectives. The aim is not to get the right answer: always having to say the 'right thing'. Questions and doubt are vital for learning and change.

The leader(s) should be genuine about their faith. It's about developing relationships not a sales job. Be authentic about your journey and the challenges you've faced.

The Alpha leader's guide highlights 3 aims as important:

- **Love** – the participants. Seek to build friendships.
- **Listen** – this is a chance for a guest to ask anything and say what they think. Try and remember to ask 'open questions' that enable a variety of responses.
- **Laugh** – try and keep the sessions low key, relaxed and fun.

ESTABLISH A WORKING AGREEMENT

Early on in the course you might talk about a shared agreement, a *contract* for how to run the course. For example you might come up with:

- **Participation:** there should be space for everyone to participate.
- **Respect:** different contributions.
- **Silence:** don't rush to fill every space. Be content with pauses and quiet.
- **Understanding:** seek to understand and work with the various contributions and perspectives of different people. Listen carefully, take time to check out your understanding, consider why their views might be as they are.
- **Brevity:** keep your contributions short. Others can always ask for clarification or more details.



Why not create a simple contract for your group with the participants?

Good Habits of Small Group Leaders

More generally, good habits of effective small group leaders include:

1. Pray for group members daily
2. Contact group members regularly
3. Prepare carefully for the group meeting
4. Mentor an apprentice leader
5. Plan group fellowship activities
6. Emphasise growth in whole-life discipleship.

Time keeping is also important. Start on time. End on time. Allocate time during a session flexibly but wisely. Sticking exactly to plan is not necessarily the right thing to do. Ending on time is always right. If one or two want to talk further do that after the session is brought to a close.

Why not get existing and potential small group leaders together to share their experience and develop plans to run an enquirers' course? Why not run a short 'action learning' course on how to run a small group? In this leaders and future leaders learn as a group by taking part in actually running small group sessions. Careful planning and review drive the learning.

