

How to End Your Group Well!

All groups come to an end. Like it or not, that's just the way it is. We think ending your group well is so important, you should start planning for it at the outset.

Sometimes it's easy to get overwhelmed by the needs of the people God has placed in your small group. You start feeling bogged down in details. It can make you lose focus. Beginning your small group with the end in mind can streamline your impact and help you clarify your goals for the group as you lead.

Identify the End

Ending your group well is all about launching members in a way that they successfully engage others in community. It's about keeping one eye on the goal of reaching those who are not currently connected and growing in the body of Christ. Every group gets to that goal in a slightly different way, because people are unique. Early in the life of your group, start thinking about what you want each member of your group to experience during the life of the group and how you want them to grow. You bring unique skills, strengths, and passions to leadership. Get alone with the Lord and ask him to show you how he wants you to use your gifts to help your group members grow. Ask God these questions on a regular basis: *"What is the one thing you want each person in my group to walk away with by the end of our time together? How can I use the unique gifts you've given me to lead my group in the direction you desire?"*

Communicate the End

Cast a vision to your group members of where the group is headed and why it matters. The most vibrant and dynamic group experiences happen when the entire group sees their time together as a ministry, a place for personal growth that will eventually reach outside the confines of that small circle. The best groups are the ones in which *everyone* in the group feels a sense of ownership and belonging. Throughout the life of the group, you'll do many studies on a variety of topics. But the foundation of your time together will be the long-term goals of the group, one of which is to create room for new people to enter into community when the time comes for your group to multiply.

- **Revisit the End**

The end of your group can be a sad inevitability everyone wants to ignore, or it can give your time together greater meaning. It's up to you. If you filter your studies, conversations, and prayer through a shared desire to engage more and more people in life-changing community over the long haul, it will change everything about how you think about and experience your group. The end will be a time for celebration, not mourning.

We all want others to experience the kind of life-changing community we've had the privilege to experience. Because we lead different people with different strengths and weaknesses, our paths to that goal may be a little different. That's exactly as it should be. This is the beauty of the body. As we each do what God has given us to do, God uses us to build up the body of Christ.

Paul said it best in Ephesians 4:11-13:

So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

What a person might get out of your group will probably be different than what they get out of the next Ridge Group. That's by design. Each group offers unique opportunities for growth.