



GROUP TROUBLESHOOTING GUIDE

Unexpected events will occur even with the best of planning and prayer. The main thing to remember in each situation is to keep a positive attitude and always be excited about those who are there. Allow yourself the opportunity of learning to flex and deal with each situation patiently. The Apostle Paul probably experienced many of the same feelings you will, but he learned simply to trust God with the lives of his disciples and to express thanks for the qualities God was building into his own life through these experiences. So don't worry over the inevitable frustration or conflicts. When we are in the disciple making business God can use many situations to teach other. Your group members will learn as much from your response as they will from the lesson itself!

"We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials for we know that they are good for us--they help us learn to be patient. And patience develops strength of character in us and helps us trust God more each time we use it until finally our hope and faith are strong and steady. Then, when that happens, we are able to hold our heads high no matter what happens and know that all is well, for we know how dearly God loves us, and feel this warm love everywhere within us because God has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with His love." (Romans 5:3-5, Living Bible)

- 1. What if only one person comes?** Consider it a special time from the Lord to know that person better. Be sure not to speak negatively of those who didn't make it. Take the time with that person to study, share and pray. Impact comes through reproduction not members.
- 2. What if people are 45 minutes late?** Quickly brief them on what you've been doing and allow them to join in if possible.
- 3. What if people talk about something irrelevant to the lesson, in other words, what if they get off the subject?** Always be transparent. Describe what you sense is taking place in the group. Make a statement like, "I think we're on another subject. Why don't we, for the sake of time, get back to the topic of _____." If the subject they want to discuss is important for everyone to know about or something they are all interested in, periodically you may divert from the lesson, make a note of the subject and agree on a time when you can study it later.
- 4. What if someone talks too much?** This is not easy to solve, but often the problem can be handled by the leader saying to another person in the group, "What do you think about this subject, John?" Choose a "John" who you know has enough confidence to answer. If the problem persists, the individual can be talked with privately and have it explained that what he has to say is good, but there are others in the group who need to feel free to express themselves. Perhaps the leader can get him to help draw quieter group members into the discussion. Break into groups of four.
- 5. What if someone gives the wrong answer?** Be very careful not to embarrass the person, but redirect the question to another with, "That's interesting. Does someone else have something to say to that?" or "Is there a Scripture verse or passage that will help us here?"
- 6. What if someone's questions or reactions are "off-the-wall"?** We should never be shocked or even surprised by "off beat" responses. Be patient. Let them see in us God's unconditional love and acceptance.
- 7. What if someone is always talking about himself and his problems?** A private conversation with the person may be sufficient. Pointing the person to the Word of God as the solution to his problems is most helpful. He may need some additional help from one of the staff, who will provide counsel. Perhaps he does not know Christ as his personal Savior and Lord and is trusting himself and other people. Does he/she need to be refereed to a support group? Meet with the person one-on-one to truly understand his/her need and provide specific steps for them or refer to counseling to find the root.



8. What if someone has a negative attitude regarding another person or the church which results in "bad-mouthing?" An enthusiastic, positive attitude on the leader's part will be "caught" by the group. A negative individual needs to be dealt with promptly, but privately. The leader should suggest that if he has something against another, he needs to pray and make sure of his own heart attitude (Matthew 7:3-5). After this, if the individual still thinks there is a problem, he should go and discuss the matter directly with that person (Matthew 18:15-17).

9. What if someone brings up a controversial subject? Do not be afraid to tackle controversial issues, but make sure that the group is aware that the final authority is the Word of God. Look to the Scriptures for answers. The leader may assign someone in the group to do some research and report back next week, but he should make sure he also does some study on the same subject. If needed contact the pastor for his direction.

10. What if someone never follows through on personal application of the prior week's discussion? The leader's example is vital. The leader's application should be concise and the goal attainable with positive steps stated that he will take this week to put into action. During the sharing time the leader can share how his application was implemented during the past week. The leader should also note applications mentioned by the group and then the following week inquire as to the results. In some cases the leader may need to talk to the individual privately about application.

11. What if someone speaks in generalizations? To bring the conversation down to earth, ask, "Can you give us a specific example on that point? Your general idea is good, but I wonder if we can't make it more concrete. Does anyone know of an example?"

12. What if someone is an informed member but too timid to enter into the discussion? To draw the person in, say something like this, "Sally here lived for quite awhile in Europe. Suppose we ask her whether she ever saw?" move from general to specific.

13. What if someone expresses an immature or negative thought? Do not pounce on him, argue or preach. See it as an opportunity to identify with him in his need to grow, and share your experience of growth. For example: "I don't get anything out of the Bible." Response - "I never did either until someone suggested reading it this way, perhaps this would help you."

14. What if someone starts having an escalating disagreement with another group member? Say something like this: "I think we all know how Jones and Smith feel about this. What do the rest of you think?"

Remember that you can always talk with your peer coach when troubleshooting an issue in your group