

# Handling Small Group Crises

Here's the scenario: Your group is in the middle of a discussion when one of the members somberly says, "My wife told me this week she wants a divorce." Everyone is stunned. Nobody knows what to say, but you know they are all looking to you for help in navigating this crisis. What do you do next?

When someone shares a personal crisis in a small group, two things are most appropriate to do: Listen and pray!

## DO'S AND DON'TS OF LISTENING

### DO . . .

- Embrace the power of listening and the healing that comes when we air a problem. When a group is quiet and doesn't try to "fix" the situation or person, the person is able simply to unload the burden.
- Affirm the person with a hug or reassuring hand on the shoulder. Communicate your care for him or her and that we all have difficulties, shame, and sin. Allow room for being emotional.
- Thank the person for sharing and give reassurance that the group will keep this confidential—for the person's sake and to remind the group. (If needed, consult your pastor.)
- Protect the person who shares from well-intentioned solution givers by saying, "Let's stop now and pray. That's the best thing we can do. If \_\_\_\_\_ wants advice, he will ask us." Then pray.

### DON'T . . .

- Don't become amateur therapists. Instead, pray.
- Don't speak for God, explaining why he allowed this to happen.
- Don't allow all the gory details to be revealed. Cut into the discussion and pray.
- Don't let the problem dominate every week or it will kill the group. People will lose interest and stop coming. Also, the person needs to focus on the encouragement of God's Word for the time that you're together instead of focusing on the problem.

## ADVICE FOR PRAYING

1. Ask, "Would you like us to pray for you now?" and "What would you like us to pray?"
2. Pray, but do not pray solutions. Instead pray for such things as peace, healing, comfort, wisdom, reconciliation, joy, compassion, patience, and perseverance.
3. Continue to pray for the person as needed, perhaps meeting outside the group or over the phone for prayer.