

Celebrate Your Group

Finding a way to celebrate your group at the end of a study guide or end of a season is important. Honoring your time together and wrapping it up gives you all a chance to acknowledge the good things that have happened and helps the group to move on to what is next. Ending a group may be sad, but the things you have given and received, and the ways in which you have grown continue with you.

IDEAS TO CELEBRATE YOUR GROUP

Plan your group's wrap-up at your usual meeting time. People may find it more difficult to come if you hold it outside their normal routine. Think through the following ideas and choose the ones that seem to be the best fit for your group as you plan for a meaningful time together. As you choose, consider the makeup of your group (gender, age, cultural backgrounds, personalities, etc.) and judge which activities and questions they'd most appreciate.

1. Few things build community like sharing food. Bring treats that are festive for the season, unleash the power of potlucks, or go out to eat with your group for the last meeting. Incorporate some of the suggestions listed here.
2. Choose one of these questions for everyone to consider and respond to: What is one thing that you are looking forward to in the future? In the next year? In your spiritual growth? What is one thing you are not looking forward to?
3. Share memorable moments in your group. What was the funniest thing that happened? The most powerful? What has this group meant recently in your life?
4. Pass out 3x5 cards and have everyone finish sentences about your experience together, such as "I learned . . ." "I gained . . ."
5. Take a group picture.
6. Affirm each group member with specific words acknowledging what you observe about their character, who they are as a person, or how you have seen them grow in this group.
7. Present each person with a small, inexpensive item and explain how it represents the unique value that he or she brings to the group.
8. Ask everyone to reflect on the group and its impact on their lives in the past year. You can use the resource "Group Reflections," available at QPlace.com, or set up a page with questions that would be a better fit for your group. Your group members' responses will encourage you and help the group realize how much it has meant to them. If your group stays in contact by email, you could send them the list of questions beforehand, but also print copies and take time to respond in writing during your last meeting together—otherwise you won't get most of them back! Names are optional. However, if any group members would be willing to give permission, and if you would send those quotes and permissions in to Q Place, some of their quotes may encourage others to get groups started!
9. If someone indicates interest in starting a new group, be sure to follow up. Meet with them to pray and plan, and also encourage them to sign up for training at www.QPlace.com/workshop.

10. Take time to pray together. Always ask permission first, and be sure to gear the time of prayer to your group's comfort level. Some ideas:
11. After sharing responses related to your group, spend a few minutes turning those thoughts into sentences of praise to God.
12. If your discussions have included prayers or praises from verses in the Bible, print those out and take turns reading them, filling in each other's names to make them personal.
13. Pair off, share requests, and pray for each other.
14. Have everyone write his or her name, phone number, and two or three prayer requests on a 3x5 card. Mix the cards up and have the group members choose one to pray for regularly. Encourage people to call each other to see how it's going.
15. As a group, spend a minute when each person is silently praying for the person on his or her right, followed by a time when anyone may pray that same prayer aloud if they are comfortable doing so.

MAINTAINING CONTACT WITH YOUR GROUP DURING A BREAK

1. Call occasionally to check in and let them know that you are praying for them.
2. Email/text to individuals or the whole group.
3. Get together as families for meals or activities.
4. Have the group over for ice cream or another dessert.
5. Host a game night (bocce ball, board games, etc.).
6. Do something as a group (dinner, a concert, a ball game), but be considerate of different financial situations.
7. Mail a fun post card to let them know what's coming up.
8. Remember birthdays and anniversaries with a card or e-card.
9. Get your group together on a weekend or holiday (e.g., the 4th of July). Go to a parade, relax by a fire pit, watch fireworks, see a movie, or have a cook-out.
10. Find a time to meet one-on-one with each member for coffee, breakfast, or lunch.