**Creating Communities of Welcome**

**7 EASY IMPROVEMENTS**

1. Hold your small group in a public place.
2. Start with high energy.

1. Start with an ice breaker.
2. Set good ground rules.
3. Don’t assume Biblical knowledge.
4. Limit theological tangents or quoting of other passages. Interpret Christian jargon.
5. Invite everyone to apply the passage. Offer one good challenge for people who have been following Jesus for a while and one good challenge for those exploring faith.

**SAMPLE GROUND RULES**

This is a safe place to explore faith, and put our ideas into practice. Honesty is one of the greatest gifts that we can give each other. We are focused on Jesus, but everyone is welcome to explore at their own pace. Being a part of this community means that we help each other grow. You can help make this a safe place for real exploration by doing four things:

* Doubts and questions are more than welcome. Please be honest.
* Listen to each other.
* Be open-minded: Consider another person’s beliefs and perspective, and not be defensive.
* Explore: Try putting the words of Jesus into practice for yourself. See what you learn.

**BEFORE AND AFTER SMALL GROUP**

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| The day before | After the Small Group |
| Talk to a few core members of the small group:   1. *Let’s help the new people feel welcome in our small group. If you were new to our group, what would help you feel welcome?* 2. *What are a few thoughtful questions you could ask a few new people?* 3. *It really helps if they can connect personally with someone outside of the small group time. How would you feel about reaching out to one of them to set up a coffee appointment this week? Please bring your calendar and get a time before they leave.* | You can help your small group continue to develop relationships with each other by periodically having social time after the small group.   * Treat them to ice cream. * Go together to feed the homeless or serve in another practical way. * Play frisbee together.   Help non-Christians in their faith journey by regularly checking in with them. Ask them:   * *How do you feel about the small group?* * *How can we make it better?* * *Who are you connecting with from small group?* * *What are you learning?* * *What practical next steps do you want to try out as you explore faith?* |

2