MAKING THE NEW PERSON FEEL WELCOME

Think back to when you were the new kid or a time where you didn't recognize one familiar face in the room. Did you feel slightly uncomfortable, awkward, and a bit out of place? Maybe you even felt a little reluctant to relax in this kind of environment, much less comfortable enough to open up with personal facts. Well, your role as an eGroup leader is to show these new members the love of Christ and ensure that they feel welcome to the group. Leading an eGroup allows you the opportunity to grow the relationships within your group and live out Romans 15:7, which says, "Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God." As a Life Group leader, you are called to set the example and lead the way for the rest of your group. This begins before the new member even shows up for the first meeting. Begin to welcome your new group member by being prompt in response to their interest in the Group. If they request information or interest in the Group, be prompt in responding to them. Ensure that they get a phone call to welcome them. Take the time to get to know them and explain what your Life Group is about and how it is structured. Let them know how excited you are to have them possibly join your group and how the rest of the group is excited to meet them as well.

When they do come to the group, here are some suggestions:

1. **When they arrive:**
   Make sure that you are the first person to greet them at the door. Smile and let them know that you are happy that they are there. Or better yet, designate a strong group member to take on this role. Some other ideas might include:

   Give them a journal and write an encouraging note inside the cover, again welcoming them to the group.

   If your group is doing a book study, have a copy of the book for them as well so that they are prepared.

2. **Set the atmosphere to open conversation:**
   There are several things that you can do to set the atmosphere in order to make the new person feel welcome. Remember that setting the atmosphere is often the last ten percent that we plan for, but often the first thing that is noticed by our members. Setting the atmosphere will not only encourage conversation and interaction between the group members, but it will also make the new person feel more at ease. Here are some options:

   Have some music playing in the background as people are walking into your home. A silent room can be an awkward detail for someone who is new to the group.

   Ensure that the new member around the room and introduce them to everyone. Then, when the group meeting begins, have everyone go around and share their names and a few things about themselves
as an icebreaker. Finding out common interests and facts about each member in the group may help the newest person feel more at home within the group setting.

3. **Lead the Life Group well:**
People want good leadership. People are drawn to a Life Group that the leader is confident and has a clear purpose and direction for the Group. So, as the leader, lead well. Be prepared each week with a clear plan and direction. Know what your goal is with the group session. Know the questions that you want to lead the Group through, and drive lively discussion. You know this already, but awkward silences may hinder the new member from feeling truly comfortable in the new environment. Then, afterwards, follow up with the new person letting them know that you are really glad that they came. You might also try to connect with the new person outside the Group setting with either yourself or other members. The sooner the new person develops friendships within the Group, the more likely they will want to return.

Develop a collection of icebreakers to use for possible new members. Possible ideas include:

1. What is one interesting fact about yourself that no one in the room knows?
2. What did you want to be when you were growing up?
3. What is your favorite movie of all time? Band? Book? Author? Song?

Who can you call on in the Life Group to help you in assisting any new people to the Group? Begin thinking of a strong group member who could take on the role of greeting the new member and showing them around.