

What A Meeting Should Look Like: An Imperfect Example

- The goal is straightforward—life transformation. We accomplish that in two ways—praying for one another and learning from God’s word. Those two activities should dominate your schedule in roughly equal amounts of time.
- Tell people it will take two hours and always shoot to be done in 90 minutes. It gives you flex time at the end to really minister to people and it also leaves them happy rather than frustrated.

6:50pm – play some good worship music on a low but audible volume. Have a snack and drinks available.

7:00pm – people have been straggling in over the last few minutes, give it at least 5 or 10 more before you shift gears. You’re not starting late, you’re starting with relationships!

7:05pm – formally shift gears. “Okay everyone, we’re going to get started now. I know everyone is already catching up a little bit, so let’s build on that. How was your week and do you have any prayer requests?” Go around in a circle. You might need to intervene to keep it tight (don’t let someone share all evening). **Caveat:** you are here to minister to people, and sometimes a significant opportunity for ministry will present itself right here. Take it. Throw the lesson out the window and minister to people when the timing seems right.

7:30pm – Pray for one another.

7:50pm – “Amen. Okay, everyone. I have a reminder about Chi Alpha—we’re going on retreat next weekend.... Blah blah blah,. Okay, enough of that. We’re continuing our study of the book of Judges. As you remember, last week we...” set up the context for the study.

7:55pm – “Okay, with that as the background, let’s read the passage aloud.” **DO NOT** have everyone read one verse and go around in a circle. Instead, pick one or two people and have them read aloud while everyone reads along in their own Bibles.

8:00pm – guide the discussion using the ACTS format below, always bringing it back to application using 1 Tim 3:16-17 as described below

8:20pm – concluding prayer (with prayerful response)

8:30pm – goodbye, announce any homework assignments (memory verses, application tasks, etc).

- Suggested alterations: move prayer from the beginning to the end, add icebreakers the first few meetings, sometimes give a 10-minute sermonette before the discussion with confusing passages.
- Don’t get anal about the schedule. I never finish on time—which is why I always schedule to finish early! Leave yourself some slack and then go with the flow.

Basic principles:

- Questions are your bread and butter. Students have enough lectures already.
- You are the leader—lead! You’re not there to simply lead a discussion in which everyone pools their ignorance. I’ve been in small groups where much darkness was shed on the issue. Intersperse teaching with the discussion. The discussion is a vehicle for truth. It’s your servant, not your master.