



Icebreaker Ideas

Relationship Builders For Life Groups

Every Life Group meeting should start with some kind of an icebreaker or other activity to get people talking and connecting with each other. Instead of doing the same thing week after week, here are a bunch of ideas for you to try.

Introductions

Introduce Yourself Variations:

- Introduce yourself as your mother would introduce you to the group.
- Introduce yourself as your childhood babysitter would introduce you.
- Introduce yourself as your best friend would introduce you.
- State your full name and the places you have lived. How did you get your middle name?

Information Gathering

Have people pair up and discover as much information as they can about each other in three minutes (full name, where they are from, major/job, favorite class or aspect of job, hobbies/interests, family facts). Then, the pairs introduce each other to the rest of group using all the information they have learned.

Shoes

Everyone takes off one of their shoes and puts it in a pile. Each person takes a random shoe and finds the person that it belongs to. Once they have found their match, they tell each other about themselves. Then, join the group and introduce each other with the information they've discovered.

Demographics

The group decides among themselves what information they would like to find out about the members of the group (major, job, classes, hobbies, interests, birth place, etc.). Each member introduces themselves according to the demographics chosen by the group.

Name Games

Name Action

The leader says his first name and does an action that begins with the letter of his first name. The next person repeats the leader's name, does his action, and then adds his own. The third repeats the first, then the second, and adds his own. Repeat around the group.

Name Game with Ball

Participants sit or stand in circle and one person has a ball. He throws it to another person while saying that person's name.

Department Store Item

Each person in the group chooses an item that might be found at a department store. The item should describe something about the person: job, hobby, major, favorite food, sport, etc. The second person repeats the first one's name and object and adds his own name and object. The third person repeats the first, the second, and adds his own name and object. Repeat around the group. *Variation: Choose an item that starts with the same letter as their first name and describes something about the person.*

History Telling Activities

Two Truths and a Lie

Each person tells three facts about himself, but one is not true. The group tries to figure out which statement is the lie. After the lie has been revealed, ask questions to find out the whole story behind the facts.



Never Have I Ever...

Have one less chair than people in a circle. One person stands in the middle and says something he has never done. Everyone who has done that activity must run across the room and try to get a different seat while the middle person tries to find a seat. The people in the circle cannot move to a chair directly to the left or right (there must be at least one chair in between). The person left out becomes the middle person and the game continues.

Bag Game – Make a Statement

Fill a brown paper bag with the following items: \$20 bill, keys, shoe, piece of jewelry, Bible, and candy bar. One at a time each person in the group pulls an item from the bag and makes an honest statement about it that reveals something about him. For example, if I pulled a \$20 bill from the bag, I might say, "If I had \$20, I'd buy ice cream for everybody." Statements can be profound or simple. The first to start then passes the object to the right and that person makes a statement until everyone has said a statement about it. Then, pull the second item from the bag and continue.

Bag Game – How are You Different?

Fill a bag with cotton balls, stapler, scissors, paper cup, eyeglasses, paper clip, pencil with eraser, and wadded paper. One at a time each person grabs an object from the bag and names one way they are different from the item. Don't use obvious differences like "This is metal, and I'm not." Encourage creativity and self-revelation. For example, "Unlike this pencil, I don't have the equipment to make my mistakes go away. When I botch something, the evidence is usually right out in the open for everyone to see. I can't just go over it a few times and make it disappear. I have to live with the mistakes I make." Start with a group member and continue on until everyone has had a chance to speak.

I've Never

Each person starts the game with five points, keeping score on one hand. Each person in turn says something they have never done. Everyone who HAS done the activity loses one point and folds down one finger. The person with the last point remaining wins.

Key Chain

Everyone gets out their key ring and, one at a time, tells the significance of everything hanging on it.

M&Ms

Pass around a bag of M&Ms and let everyone take as many as they would like. Don't tell them anything else. Make sure they don't eat them yet. Then, have them tell one piece of information about themselves for every M&M they took. You can specify the topics based on the M&M color (yellow = family, red = high school story, green = a place they've traveled, brown = random fact, blue = hobbies, orange = favorite memory).

Web Game

Have one person hold a ball of yarn in one hand and the yarn end in the other hand. As he throws the yarn ball to someone else, he says something positive about the recipient. The recipient holds onto the yarn and throws the ball to someone else saying something positive about him and the game continues. The yarn ball can be thrown multiple times to each person, each one holding onto the yarn as he throws the ball.

- *Variation #1: When someone catches the yarn ball, he tells something about himself before he throws it to someone else.*
- *Variation #2: When someone catches the yarn ball, he tells a little known fact about himself before he throws it to someone else.*

Balloon Game

Have each person put one piece of information about himself in a balloon. Then, have each blow up his balloon and throw it in the middle of the circle of people. One by one, pop the balloons and guess to whom that piece of information belongs.



Pictionary Stories

Hand out one Pictionary card to each person and have her tell stories about her life using three of the words on the card.

Group Recall

Participants are asked to consider whom they would choose to be if they had to be another person who has lived or is living (a real person). After they have chosen someone, the participants are next asked to reflect upon why they selected this person. When all are ready to share, the facilitator explains the process: A volunteer goes first, telling the person she would like to be and why. The next person sitting to the left first recalls what the volunteer shared and then shares her selection, etc., going around the circle.

Favorite Cards

Give each person an index card. Have them divide the index card into four sections. In one section, they draw a picture of their favorite TV show, in another section their favorite state, in the third section their favorite book or magazine, and last, their favorite food. Everyone then walks around the room showing each other their cards. The object is to try to guess what the other people drew on their card. Do not tell each other whether their guesses are right or wrong; just listen. After everyone has guessed at each others' card, go around the circle and tell what your favorites are.

Pairs

Divide the group into groups of two, preferably with the person they know least. Send each pair off by themselves where they won't be bothered by other pairs. For ten minutes have them share personal and important things with each other in order to get to know each other better. They should take turns "interviewing" each other to gain some knowledge and understanding of their partner. After ten minutes, come back to the group and have each person tell what she learned about her partner. For a guide you may want to prepare a list of basic questions the pairs can use as a starting point.

Toilet Paper Game

Get a roll of toilet paper. Without giving any other information, pass around the roll and tell each person in the group to take as much toilet paper as they need. Then, one at a time, group members tell one thing about themselves for each square of toilet paper they took.

Picture This

Give these instructions: Paint a word picture to describe with as many details as you can how you feel about your life right now. For example, if you were to describe your life as a boat, be specific. You might be a cruise ship or a tugboat, on a calm lake or raging river rapids depending on how you feel things are going in your life. The more details you add to your picture, the easier it will be for the group to understand how you're doing. You might add where you see Jesus in your word picture.

Listening Check

At the beginning of the group meeting, warn the members that, at the end, there will be a listening check for what they learned about each other during the meeting. At the end of the meeting, choose one person from the group to focus on at a time. The rest of the members take turns recalling information they learned about the person during the meeting. Ideally, everyone in the group should contribute at least one thing. After most of the group has spoken, move the focus to another person. Continue until everyone has had her turn in the spotlight.

Get To Know You Charades

Like Charades, each person acts out a word or phrase that pertains to his life. For instance, he could act out "born in Pennsylvania" or "studying math" or whatever else he would like to tell. For more guidance, provide categories: favorite book, movie, food, place; hobby, interest, travel goal, etc.

Guessing Game

Everyone writes on a slip of paper three things about themselves that no one else in the group knows. Gather the papers and mix them up. One person reads one at a time and the group tries to guess who it is.



Collage (this activity will take up the whole small group time)

Have magazines available for each person in the group. Each person is given tape/glue stick, scissors, and a piece of paper. Using the magazines, they are to create a collage that describes themselves using pictures or individual words that they find. Then, explain the collage to the group.

- *Variation:* Each person creates three collages. The first describes where they were before they met Christ. The second describes where they are now. The third describes where they hope to be in the future.

Inside and Out (this activity may take up the whole small group time)

Hand out three magazines and a blank sheet of paper folded in half to each group member. Have several rolls of Scotch tape available. Tell the members something like this, "This is a two-part exercise. First, go through these magazines and find three to five pictures, phrases, or words that describe your outward life, how you present yourself to people, the way others see you. You can ask yourself this question, 'If someone followed me around for a week, what would they see?' Next, find three to five pictures, words, or phrases that describe your inner life, the thoughts and feelings you keep to yourself, the person you are in your heart. Think of some things that, good or bad, very few people know about you." Give them enough time to finish the project. One at a time, have everyone briefly explain their choices about the outside. Then, repeat and have them share the inside.

Tell About Your Past Week (or Event)

Pipe Cleaner Art

Give everyone a pipe cleaner and have them shape it into what their last week has been like. Each person then tells about what he or she made and how it describes their week.

Cereal Description

Bring three or four different kinds of cereal that could be useful in describing one's week. Pass the cereal boxes around and have each person take a handful of the cereal that best describes his past week. Then, have each tell why he chose the type of cereal to describe the week. For example: Lucky Charms – I felt like things went well for me this week because... ; Fruit Loops – I felt like I was going in loops, up and down, all week because... .

Fruit or Vegetable

Have each person choose a fruit or vegetable with an adjective that would describe her life this week – dried fig, ripe cantaloupe, smashed banana, etc....

Highs, Lows, and Inspiring

Each person in turn describes one high point (good or happy time), one low point (difficult, sad, or frustrating time), and inspiring point (something encouraging) of his past week.

Adjectives

What three adjectives describe your past week?

How do you feel?

Give three words to describe how you feel right now. Have you experienced stress or tension this week? What caused it? Pray for each other.

Member in the Spotlight

During part of each small group meeting, feature one member until all have been featured (six members = six weeks). The featured member's goal is to invite the rest of the group into the meaningful, interesting, unique experiences and aspects of their life. They can tell whatever they want about themselves. They can bring as many examples as appropriate (art pieces, collections) or actually take the group to a special place or do a favorite hobby/interest together if all can participate. The group should show genuine interest as they would want given to them when it's their turn.

Some options include:

- Spiritual journey or testimony



- Artistic expressions
- Travel stories and souvenirs
- Tell about special family members
- Life milestones
- Achievements
- Sports
- Hobbies, interests, collections, talents
- Favorite food or treat brought to eat together
- Take the group to a favorite or meaningful place

Spiritual Journey

During one small group session, each person draws their spiritual journey as a graph or a road map.

- Show high places and low spots in the journey.
- Show places where God revealed something about Himself that made a difference.
- Show where he felt especially close to God and where he felt distant.

Magazines (this activity may take up the whole small group time)

Using magazines provided, cut out pictures (or words) that describe the following six areas and paste them on a piece of paper:

- A picture which describes you
- Your favorite (outdoor) activity
- A color which describes your personality
- A picture which describes what makes you feel most alive (grants a sense of significance/meaning)
- A picture which describes your favorite time of day
- A picture you like

Asking Questions Games

Ball Of Paper

Make a giant ball of newspaper by wrapping newspaper around a core but in between each layer place a piece of candy with a written question wrapped around it. When it comes time for icebreakers, pass around this already made ball of paper and have each person take a layer off. They have to answer the question and then they can eat the candy.

Balloon Questions

Pass a blown up balloon around the circle with a sharpie. Each person writes a question on the balloon. The question can be about what they'd like to know about the other group members, or it can be something they wish someone would ask them. Then pass the balloon around the circle and each person chooses three of the questions on the balloon to answer.

Jenga

Write out questions on small pieces of paper and tape them to Jenga pieces. Set up the game and play like normal. Each time someone removes a piece, that person must answer the question that is on that piece.

Trust Building Games

You earn trust by being there when someone needs you. All participants must be willing to earn each other's trust by being there for each other in these exercises. If not, the experience will be damaging.



Electric Fence

Set up an obstacle to represent a fence using rope or twine about waist high. Instruct the group that they have just escaped from prison and must get over the “electric fence” without getting shocked. It is the responsibility of the group to get all members of their group over the obstacle. They may not go under.

Group Sit

Eight or more people stand in circle with hands on the waist of person in front of them, elbows at 90-degree angle. At the signal, everyone sits on knees of the person behind them all at the same time.

Back to Back

Starting in a seated position, partners lock arms back to back and try to stand up. Try it in fours.

Human Knot

Have a small group form a circle. Every member of the circle grabs a hand of two different people who are not next to them. Once everyone’s hands are intertwined, the group tries to untangle themselves without letting go of the people whose hands they originally grabbed.

Large Group and/or Co-ed Games

Rank Order

Divide into teams of 8-10. Have each team rank itself in order according to a topic (for example: age, birth date, height, etc). All teams rank according to the same topic. The team to finish first wins.

Wizards, Giants, Elves

As a variation of rock, paper, scissors, this game needs plenty of running room. The playing area is a large rectangular shape with a centerline and “home” lines at either end. Divide the group into two teams and announce a time limit for the game (45 minutes). Each team chooses a “home” side, goes into a huddle there, and decides whether to be Elves, Wizards, or Giants for the first round. Throughout the game, each team’s goal is to stay on the home side. Then, the two teams face each other at the centerline, each team standing in a line shoulder to shoulder. At a signal, each team acts out their choice: Elves bend over with their hands on their knees, Wizards stretch their arms out in front as if casting a spell, and Giants stand tall with their arms above their heads. Elves beat Wizards, Wizards beat Giants, and Giants beat Elves. The losing team turns and runs back to its own home line before the winning team members tag them. All who are tagged before they cross their home line must join the other team. Elves chase Wizards, Wizards chase Giants, and Giants chase Elves. Now, the teams (with their new members or less members) huddle and decide their choice for the next round. Play continues until time is up. The side with the most people at the end of the time wins.

Magazine Movie

Divide group into teams and give each team a magazine picture. The teams have ten minutes to come up with a movie based on the picture and perform it for all.

Animal Noise

Write the name of an animal on 2-3 slips of paper. Write the name of a different animal on 2-3 more slips of paper. Continue until there is a paper for each group member. Distribute the papers so that no one reads it except the recipient. Have the group spread out. Everyone must keep their eyes closed, make their animal noise, and use the sound to locate the other people who are the same animal.

Human Trivial Pursuit

Divide the group into two teams with people who know each other well on the same team. Give everybody six small papers and a pen. On each paper, they write a fact about themselves having to do with the corresponding trivial pursuit category: Geography, History, Entertainment, Art & Literature, Science & Nature, Sports & Leisure (For example: Geography – “I once tried to dig a hole to China in my backyard.”). Each team collects its papers and mixes them up well. One team reads one or its papers aloud and the other team together tries to figure out who the fact is about. Teams alternate turns and get a point for every right answer.