

707 GROUP LEADER GUIDE



thegp.org
912-264-3474
info@thegp.org



THE
GATHERING
PLACE

DEAR 707 LEADERS,


Thank you for your dedication to your students and to the 707 program! 707 groups are a great way for students in our community to grow in their faith, build friendships, and have 707 leaders as mentors throughout their middle and high school years. The 707 program is transforming the lives of hundreds of middle and high school students in our community, but it would not be possible without all of you! Please remember that The GP staff is here to help you and support you in your ministry to these students. As the primary contact for 707 groups, please feel free to contact me for assistance or ideas. Thank you again for being the hands and feet of this ministry!

Sincerely,
Camille Hannah
Associate Director of Discipleship
The Gathering Place
camille@thegp.org
912-264-3474 (office)
912-297-4028 (mobile)

WHAT IS A 707 GROUP?

A 707 is a small group of students between 6th grade and 12th grade that meet together at 7:07am with two adult leaders who facilitate these groups. According to Barna research, students need 7 positive adult Christian influences in order for their faith to last. This program gives students 2 of those 7 positive adult influences!

707 groups are made up of either all girls or all guys who are in the same grade. Ideally, the groups meet weekly during the school year until they graduate from high school. The dynamics of these groups are all very different, and may change over the years, but the consistent factors in all 707 groups are faith, mentorship, and community!



FORMS & ADDITIONAL INFO

<http://thegp.org/707groups>

JUST A FEW MEETING LOCATION IDEAS

Please call ahead to ensure that there's space for your group on the day you want to meet!

St Simons Island

Sweet Mama's

98 Retreat Plaza
(912) 634-6022

Wake Up Coffee Company

50 Aviator Plaza, Suite 106
(912) 268-2429

Chick-Fil-A SSI

2205 Demere Rd
(912) 638-2965

Sandy Bottom Bagels

242 Retreat Village
(912) 434-9310

Brunswick

Wake Up Coffee

4506 Altama
(912) 289-2323

Grandy's

3411 Cypress Mill Rd
(912) 264-3700

Daddy Cate's Coffee

302 Gloucester St
(912) 264-9363

The GP Office


900 Bay St
(912) 264-3474

Chick-Fil-A Brunswick

70 Golden Isles Plaza
(912) 466-9911


Gather Thrift and Cafe

3883 Altama
(912) 217-0033



PRACTICAL STEPS FOR STARTING YOUR GROUP

After you have completed your training, The Gathering Place staff will give you a list of all your students, their contact information, and their parents' information.

- Get to know your co-leader. Either you have signed up with someone you already know, or The GP staff has matched you with a co-leader for your group. Talk with your co-leader about your hopes for this year, and start planning together.
 - Send an email introducing yourself and your co-leader to the parents of your 707 students.
 - Call all your girls/guys and speak to them, reminding them of when you are meeting and where. We recommend that you share your cell phone numbers with them in this conversation so they have a way to contact you if something comes up.
 - Recruit your point mom, (The GP can help you with this) and ask her to line up carpools or breakfast rotations if you need them for your group.
 - When you meet with your students the first time, have them write down their cell phone numbers, emails, and their mom or dad's numbers as well. Compare them to the list that The GP has shared with you, update any information as necessary. Please help The GP keep records up to date by sharing any changes in your group with the 707 contact person on staff.
 - Have an ice-breaker or game ready to start off each week. For more on ice-breakers see "Reaching the Students in Your Small Group" The students may be shy the first couple of weeks, and may not want to talk. Feel free to ask multiple ice-breaker questions so you can create an open atmosphere.
 - If you need to change your meeting time or location, you **MUST COMMUNICATE** with all your students, their parents and the 707 Director so that they know about the change. The point mom can help in these situations.
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- During your first meeting tell your students what your expectations are for group members, for example:
 - Be on time.
 - Make sure you know who is taking you to school after group.
 - Bring a Bible, unless they are provided in your meeting place.
 - Keep cell phones in book bags during group time.
 - 707 groups need a basis of trust. All personal stories shared in meetings are to be respected and not shared outside of the group. (Leaders - if a student shares something with you that leads you to believe he or she is in danger, please share this with The GP staff immediately. Please see the section “Protecting Your Students” for more details)
- Don't worry! You are not there to impress your students, you are there to build relationships with them. Don't get caught up in the details. Relax and enjoy the time with your students.



REACHING THE STUDENTS IN YOUR GROUP

It's ok to be nervous about your first meeting. Teenagers can be difficult to reach, but we promise you, they want your attention and advice. The best way to reach your students is to create an atmosphere of honesty. When meeting with your students, be open and encouraging. The kids will feed off of your energy during meetings. If you are closed off and shy, your students will be the same way. If you are engaging and intentional, your students will engage with you and speak more openly. Fortunately, you will probably meet over breakfast. Eating helps tension in all awkward situations!

Getting to Know Your Students

When starting your group, some healthy first year goals are: know your students' parents by name, if they have siblings or pets, what sports they play, and what they like to do in their free time.


We recommend starting your group with ice-breakers. Start with general questions such as:

- "What's your favorite movie?"
- "What was your favorite birthday?"

As you get to know your group, those ice-breaker questions will become more deep.

- "Who is one of your heroes and why?"
- "I wish someone would have told me _____ before I started middle school."

Towards the end of the school year ask questions about feelings:

- "What are you most afraid of?"
 - "How do you want to be remembered?"
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Beware Not to Over-Share

In a small group setting where you are the leader, over-sharing can be detrimental to the growth and unity of your group. The students don't need to know if you and your spouse are fighting. If something is happening that will impact your involvement with the group, share a little about what is going on. This is important to discuss. If it is a major life event, then talk about it, but tie it into scripture as well. Sharing about your experiences is a good way for you to show your group how to incorporate God into all areas of life, just remember to do so in moderation.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Please make sure that what you post is God-honoring. Watch your language and the content of the pictures you share as well. Students don't miss a thing. Your reputation with your group is a valuable thing!

If your social media accounts include questionable content from your past or present, please consider editing or deleting things you do not want your students or their parents to see.

See the 707 Standards and Commitments for specific guidelines.



HELPFUL TIPS FOR SMALL GROUP MEETINGS

Don't Answer Your Own Questions

Nothing ruins communication faster than answering your own question. The best trick is to ask the same question again, in a different way. Don't be afraid of silence, eventually one of your students will speak up! Even if they get the answer wrong, encourage them along. Phrases like "Good answer, anyone else have an idea?" help to keep the conversation going.

Keep Them Searching

Have your lesson prepared, but if something major happens, feel free to talk about this instead. Divorce, disasters, sudden death, or health problems are all reasons to table your lesson for that week and discuss the matter at hand. Try not to preach at them or judge them for struggling with small things. Ask open-ended questions and let them find the answer, even if you have to start with that same topic next week.

There's Always One

No matter what, you will always have one student who dominates the conversation, or one who doesn't speak at all. These situations can be frustrating, but stay calm. Privately encourage either the talker or the non-talker to either let others share or to speak up. These actions are typical when students are nervous, just be patient!



COMMUNITY SERVICE

Community service opportunities are a great addition to your small group time. We encourage every group to aim for two community outreach projects a year. Some options are: adopting a family to buy gifts for at Christmas time, volunteering at the Humane Society for an afternoon, serving at Manna House, or packing bags of toiletries for Salvation Army. Exposing your students to the needs of people around them gives them a tangible idea for service and opportunities to work out their faith. Please do not transport students in your car without a Parental Consent Form, these are available on our website!

Contact The GP for service project ideas!


THEY CAN TEACH OTHERS ABOUT GOD'S LOVE!

"Therefore go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

- Matthew 28:19

You are making disciples in your 707 group, but it is also important to teach them how to do the same thing. You love your students well, so they know how to love well. When you respect them and offer openness and mercy, they will begin to exemplify those things in their own lives. We must encourage our students to serve well within the community where God has placed them.

Teach them how to handle their classmates, and encourage them to speak up and to defend their beliefs. The most important life skill you can send a student away with is how to effectively communicate their faith. If they know who they are in Christ they will more likely be able to live that out day to day. This is what outreach is all about, you reach the students in your group so they in turn reach others with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.



YOUR SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Your Growth = Their Growth

It is so vital to the growth of your group that you are actively growing in your faith as well. You can only give what you have to offer, so if you are spiritually dry, your lessons and group time will reflect this problem. We want you to know Jesus personally, in the ups and downs of life, our desire is that HE is the one constant in your life.

No Leader is a Superhero

What we desire from our 707 leaders is authenticity and vulnerability. When you are struggling, we want you to know where to go for help. Below are some great organizations or suggestions to help you in times of need. Use them as necessary and please communicate with us if you need to take a break from your group; we have volunteers who will fill your shoes until you can come back.

Counseling Centers and Resources

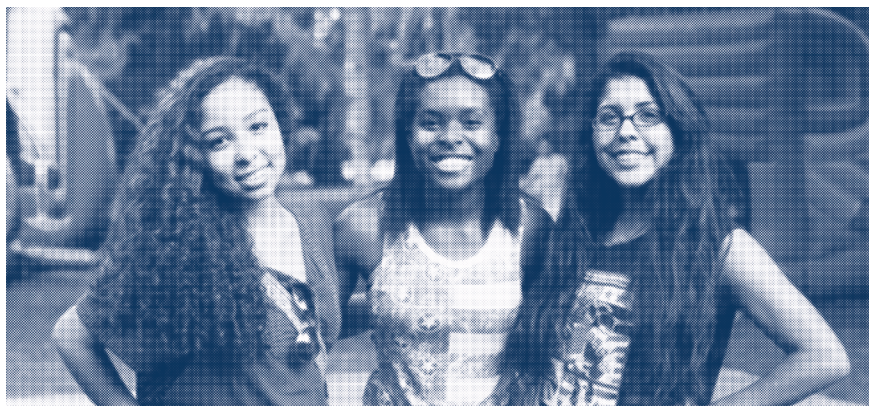
CENTERED FOR LIFE

Christian Counseling for
individuals and families,
support groups
Steve & Debbie Temmer
(912) 268-4488
2487 Demere Rd
St Simons Island, GA 31522

LIVING WELL MINISTRIES

Christian Counseling through
small groups and classes
Vicki Goodrich
(912) 279-0480
2023 Norwich St
Brunswick, GA 31520

YOUR CHURCH COUNSELOR OR PASTOR



RESOURCES FOR GROUP TIME

The most commonly asked question of all new group leaders is “What do I teach?” This is a great question, so we have provided some suggestions below.

Websites to browse:

- Youth Specialties
- Orange
- RightNow Media
- Scripture Union
- Axis
- Rooted Ministry
- Youth Pastor Theologian
- Hot Topics- have kids ask questions about current events
- 2022-2023 GP Curriculum available at the GP Office

Tie In With Their Youth Group

Don't forget to contact the youth pastor of the church your students attend and see what they have been teaching at church. You can always use their ideas and expound upon what is already being taught. Reinforcement helps students learn.

Uncomfortable Topics & Series

We encourage you to do "uncomfortable" series with your students, such as purity, sex and dating, but please communicate this with your group parents before you begin studies like these. Some students may be too young to grasp what is being taught and their parents may keep them home those weeks. GP staff can also help you select books and curriculum for such topics.

Biblically Sound

We require that what you teach lines up with The GP's statements of faith. Our 707 Standards and Commitment can be found on our website. Please refer to them for our policies on certain topics.



THE SHOCK FACTOR

One of the most challenging things about leading a small group is learning how to respond to the surprising things your student may say, otherwise known as “The Shock Factor.” Inevitably one of your students will share something shocking with you. Sometimes students share outlandish things to get a reaction from you. By remaining calm, cool, and collected you enable real and honest conversation.

If your student shares stories of abuse inflicted upon them, or expresses desires to hurt themselves or someone else, The GP staff needs to know immediately so that we can all take the appropriate measures to help. Please see the section “Protecting Your Students” for addressing and reporting abuse.



PROTECTING YOUR STUDENTS

What must be reported in abuse situations:


- Deliberate physical injury of a child
- Sexual molestation
- Abuse, neglect, and/or abandonment
- Causing pain or allowing great bodily harm, death, unjustifiable physical pain or mental suffering or danger to health
- Exploitation of a minor, child pornography, or prostitution

We are in a spot of privilege by leading these students, and we are in a position of responsibility to address possible abuse situations. We are termed 'mandated reporters' by being any of the following:

- Public/private workers: employees of public and private schools, child-care personnel, resident and day-camp employees, social workers, peace and probation officers, members of clergy and other youth ministry practitioners, child-welfare supervisors, and certified personnel.
- Anyone with reasonable grounds. Some states require anyone to report when he or she has reasonable grounds to believe that a child has been or is likely to be abused.

WHEN YOU SUSPECT ABUSE

Reporting procedures are as follows:

- As necessary, stabilize the immediate abusive situation and separate the individuals involved.
 - This is a complicated and intricate matter, so before taking any further action, immediately contact The GP's Executive Director for advice on how to proceed. Leave questioning and analysis of the situation to the proper authorities.
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- Any abusive situations you observe or become aware of must be reported immediately. Failure to report an abuse situation is merit for immediate dismissal from employment or volunteer position with The GP.
- Please fill out an abuse report form available through The GP.

SAFE SANCTUARY POLICIES


At The Gathering Place, we strive to maintain best practices in youth ministry aligning with the “Safe Sanctuary” training program we give to all new leaders. In order to provide and maintain a safe, transparent atmosphere where students feel safe and parents feel comfortable, please adhere to the following policies.

- Make sure you have signed permission forms from parents before transporting any students.*
- Never transport a student alone, or meet with one student privately.
- Permission forms are needed from all students present on any community outreach event or special outing.*
- It's always preferable to hold 707 meetings in public places. But in the situation that a group is meeting in a leader's home, at least two adults need to be present: either both co-leaders, or a leader and a chaperone.

* All permission forms can be found at <http://thegp.org/707>

STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

Failure to abide by the 707 Standards and Commitment (Available at <http://thegp.org/707>) will be considered grounds for dismissal as a 707 leader. Please consider your ability to abide by these standards before committing to this role.



ABOUT THE GATHERING PLACE

The Gathering Place is a community-based student leadership development organization that has served the youth of the southeast since 1981. Annually, The Gathering Place reaches thousands of Middle School, High School and College age students through a variety of programs such as: mentor groups, large outreach events and internships. The ministry of The Gathering Place works towards unity within diversity and unites churches, para-church ministries, schools and other community groups around one cause: to raise up strong Christian leaders who will have an impact on their communities, and the world.

THE GATHERING PLACE EXISTS TO

- REACH** students with the Gospel of Jesus Christ
- EQUIP** students to be effective Christian leaders
- SEND** students to impact their local schools, churches, and communities

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