

# How to Host a Gathering

## Vision of Gatherings:

Gatherings are relational events to create a safe place to introduce discouraged, disconnected, or disinterested friends to Jesus through Christian community.

## Why?

Hosting a gathering is a great way to introduce your friends outside or disengaged from church to see how Jesus can make a greater difference in their lives. A gathering can be used to “gather” people around an activity to build relationships that help them be more open to Jesus, to hear a testimony of what Jesus has done in someone’s life, address a felt need from a Gospel centered perspective, or by multiple groups working together to help their friends respond to the Gospel.

## What?

Gatherings can take different forms based on the gifts, personality, and network of the leader. The leader should discern what kind of gathering would be best for the people they want to invite. Gatherings typically take place outside the walls of the church building.

## There are 3 levels of Gatherings:

Level (*Ideal numbers; Not a formula)	Purpose	Planning	Win
<b>Level 1 (6-20 people)</b>	Relational event around a shared interest (food, activity, meeting a need, etc)	-Relational activity -Little preparation -No presentation	-Trust and friendship with built with non-Christian or disconnected friends.
<b>Level 2 (15-40 people)</b>	More intentional event to encounter Jesus through testimony or addressing a felt need	-Pick a location (back-yard, workplace, etc) - Low preparation/ create a flow for event - Pick someone to share testimony/ topic ahead of time	-Non-Christian or disconnected friends hear the Gospel in real life -Believers encouraged and emboldened for mission
<b>Level 3 (40-150+ people)</b>	An outreach event with other group leaders in your network with an invitation to respond to the Gospel and next steps	-Reserve a location -High preparation/ create a flow for event -Pick a testimony/ topic speaker -Find worship leader	-Non-Christian or disconnected friends hear the Gospel and are given a chance to respond -Believers encouraged and emboldened for mission -Network of groups strengthened

# How do I start a gathering?

## 1. Pray about who God would want you to invite

\*\*\*friends, co-workers, neighbors, in your group's network, etc

## 2. Discern which level of gathering would be the best step for you to plan.

- a. Level 1: Your friends just need to be around your Christian friends and be loved where they are.
- b. Level 2: You have friends you want to invite to hear a testimony of life-change.
- c. Level 3: You have a network groups that want to reach out to friends to invite response to the Gospel.

## 3. Pick a date and time that works for you.

## 4. Plan the flow of the event.

- a. Level 1: Pick the activity your friends would connect with. Not complicated. (Hiking, cookout, service project, game night, etc).
- b. Level 2: Keep it simple. Pick someone to share a testimony ahead of time. Get some snacks/ drinks.
- c. Level 3: Plan ahead. Work with other group leaders to get the word out a month in advance.

\*\*See sample event flows on the next page.

## 5. Pray and invite people personally to come. Let people know what to expect.

- a. Level 1: *"I'm gathering some friends for a cook-out Sunday at 5:30. I'd love for you to join us? We are just going to hang out, have some fun, play volleyball. Would you be up for coming. It's pot-luck. I'll provide the burgers and everyone is bringing a side to share. I'll have about 10 friends there and hope you can come!"*
- b. Level 2: *"I'm gathering some friends next Tuesday night at 8pm at my house to bring some encouragement into our lives. We are going to have some snacks and drinks, and you know the guy you met at the cookout, David, is going to share some of his story about how God has made a difference in his life. I'd love for you to come. Can you join us?"*
- c. Level 3: *"We are hosting an event for men next Wednesday night at 6:30pm. I'd love for you to join us. We are going to talk about some common issues men face and how God can make a difference in our lives. I'd love for you to join us. Can you come?"*

## 6. Send follow up invites the week of the event.

## 7. Follow up with people afterwards and follow the Holy Spirit's leading to bring encouragement.

# Sample Event Flows

## 1. Level 1: Cookout and game night, 5:30-7:30pm

- a. 5:30-6: Welcome/ connect
- b. 6-6:30: Pot-luck Dinner
- c. 6:30-7:30p: Hang-out games

## 2. Level 2: Testimony night, 8-9:30pm

- a. Ahead of time:
  - i. Pick someone to share their testimony (use the testimony guide to help them prepare).
  - ii. Get some snacks and drinks people will like.
- b. Event flow:
  - i. Connect (20-30 minutes): Relational time to connect and share food/ drinks.
  - ii. Welcome and introduce speaker (20 minutes): Set up speaker to share their story or about topic for the night.
  - iii. Response time (40 minutes): Give people space to ask questions of speaker and/or share in groups of 3-4.
    1. What resonated with you from the speaker?
    2. What is a celebration and challenge in your life right now?
    3. How can we pray for you?
- c. Close (5 minutes): Thank people for coming, close with a short prayer. Invite any appropriate next steps.

## 3. Level 3: Men's outreach night, 6:30-9pm

- a. Ahead of time:
  - i. Plan a night that works for the leaders of the groups working together to invite others.
  - ii. Find a space that works for the number of people you expect (community center, park, bonfire location, etc).
  - iii. Pick someone to lead host, share a testimony, or address a felt need.
  - iv. If you want to have someone lead worship, plan logistics (worship leader, tech needs, etc).
- b. Event flow.
  - i. Connect (10 minutes): Have some music on or ice-breaker question to help people connect as they come in.
  - ii. Welcome and vision (10 minutes): Welcome people and share vision/ expectations for the night.
  - iii. Worship (20 minutes)
  - iv. Testimony or Felt Need message (20-30 minutes): Make sure to lift up Jesus and the truth of His Word in your story.
  - v. Group response (45 minutes):
    1. Host leads into help people respond to the Gospel and reflect on speaker's message.
    2. Provide a few questions to help people respond, share, and pray together
  - vi. Closing (5 minutes): Wrap up night, invite next steps (Gospel, groups, etc). Pray.