

## **Icebreakers and Other Fun Ideas**

One of the most important aspects of any house church gathering has to be your first activity. Those first 15-30 minutes set the tone for the whole evening and should be the very outer edge of your “funnel”.

What is a funnel? Basically it is a concept that I like to use to divide up the evening and bring the conversation closer and closer to the heart. If you design your funnel properly you will draw your members into deep conversation in a very natural way without going too fast.

Your icebreaker time will look different than other house churches based on your unique personality, but I can give you some basic ideas that have worked for me in the past.

For some house churches the icebreaker time may just be a loose conversation about recent events in your member’s lives. This can be very effective, but I like to be more specific with my icebreaker time to lead the group toward the topic of the night. Even casual conversation can still have a purpose and lead you toward your study time.

### **Casual conversation**

This is the easiest type of icebreaker to describe because it is very open. Basically you think of a few questions that tie-in to the topic for the night and then just inject those into the conversation. You are simply steering the conversation toward a pre-determined goal without having a specific structure. This kind of icebreaker works well in groups that are naturally talkative. The danger is letting the conversation get too far off target. You need to be very attentive to the conversation to keep the group on track.

It also may work to just go around the room and answer two questions, heart and home. Each person just gives a quick update on the current condition of each of these areas of their life.

### **Direct questions**

This is probably my favorite form of icebreaker because I love asking questions. What I try to do is pick three questions and then go around the room until everyone has answered them. The first one or two questions can be very easy to answer without too much thought, but the idea is to get a little more personal with each question and move toward the target topic for the evening.

Here are some examples of easier questions.

- What is your favorite vacation memory? (Or birthday, holiday etc.)

- What is your favorite movie, book, author, restaurant etc.?
- Who would you love to meet someday?
- What is your worst vacation memory? (Or birthday, holiday ect.)
- What is your favorite sport, team or athlete?
- What would your dream vacation be?
- Recall an embarrassing childhood memory.
- Did you ever pull a really good prank?
- Were you ever the target of a really good prank?
- What is your favorite leisure activity?
- Do you have a favorite quiet place to sit and reflect on life?

Here are some examples of deeper questions.

- What is your biggest regret in life?
- What is your biggest fear?
- What kind of legacy do you want to leave when you are gone?
- Is there anything in your life that you wish you could change?
- Where would you like to be in 5 years or 10 years?
- Do you need to let go of a past hurt?
- Do you need to forgive someone who wronged you?
- When was your last really good conversation with God?
- When was your last really good date with your spouse?

## Games

Games are always fun, but you want to be careful not to take up too much of the evening or you may have trouble getting to the important conversations. Try to think up some creative ways to shorten popular boxed games so they don't take too long. "Apples to Apples" is a great game for this. Basically there are two types of cards in the box: describing words and people/places. One game would be to take the describing words and deal out 5-7 to each group member. Then you go around the room and everyone hands a card to the person who is "it". The card should describe that person. The person in question then picks their favorite and the person who submitted the card gets a point. The person with the most points after you have gone around the room wins.

Hand everyone in the room a blank card or piece of paper. Have them write three things on the card and then hand it to you without their name on it. You come up with the three things that they write. For example have them write down their favorite movie, place to visit and a nickname they had growing up. Now you read each card and the group tries to guess who it is. They can keep track of their right and wrong guesses separately and you can have a winner at the end, or you can just try to get a consensus guess from the room. Encourage everyone to come up with answers that the group may not know so they get to know each other better by the end of the game. Another variation of the above game

would be to have the group members write down two truths and a lie about themselves and then everyone tries to guess which thing is the lie. For this game you would need them to write their name on the paper.

This next game may take a little longer depending on how you run it. Cut up some sheets of paper into small strips and hand out 5 strips to each person. Have them write down the name of a person on each piece of paper. The names should be fairly famous people, but they can also be obscure if you want to make the game more interesting. Put all of the names in a paper bag or a bowl. Divide the room into two teams and then sit in a circle with the teams alternated around the room. Pass the bowl clockwise and each person has 30 seconds to pull names out of the bag and try to get their team to guess who they are. You can see that the obscure names can make the game difficult at this point. The person reading can pass on names they don't know, and any un-guessed names go back in the bag for the next person.

There is another similar game that involves drawing. Using strips of paper again get five celebrity names, this time they need to be people everyone knows, five locations and five activities. The Locations can be anything, from Paris to a rest area bathroom. As the leader you need to make sure that you don't have any multiples so try to make up a few strips of your own before the group arrives so you can easily replace the multiples. You don't want to have three Sylvester Stallones' because that will confuse the game. Now hand out two full sheets of paper to each person and then have them each draw out 1 name, 1 location and 1 activity from the strips of paper. Now they may have Sylvester Stallone, skiing and Hawaii in their hands. The next step is to set a timer for 5 minutes and have everyone draw a picture of what they picked. After they are done drawing you pass the pictures around the room clockwise until each person has seen each picture. They need to try to guess the three things while they are looking at each picture and write it down. Give them 1 minute per picture. Each person will get one point for each correct guess they make and the winner is the one with the most points. You may want to save time and write up the name, location and activity cards on your own before hand so the game doesn't take too long.

I have also used a number of made-up games using dice. You need two dice for this game and you need to take prep time before the meeting starts to come up with some topics. Basically each die will represent a different pre-determined list so try to use two different colored dies if you can. Each person in the group will role the dice and the numbers they get will determine a person and a question to ask that person. The roller will be asking someone in the group a question. One die will determine who gets asked and the other die will determine the type of question. You can assign any value you wish to the numbers. For example, maybe the numbers 1 and 6 represent the person to your left. 2 and 5 would be the person on your right. 3 or 4 means you can choose any person you wish. As for the question die, you can assign specific questions or simply give them a topic and they can determine the specific question themselves. You can make the questions as deep or

shallow as you want, just make sure everyone in the group is comfortable with the level of intimacy you are targeting before you start. This game is wide open as far as creativity is concerned and can be used over and over.