

How to Handle a Member's Crisis Revelation in LifeGroup Meetings

While not an every week occurrence it is quite likely for your group members to experience some kind of personal crisis which they reveal to the group. This can occur during just about any time during the meeting. It happens during the initial time when people are arriving, during the Study time and often during the prayer time. Examples of the kind of crises that might be shared are touched on in the Case Studies we discussed in the LifeGroup Leaders Meeting on December 4.

1 - Case Study in Crisis Moments

Couple arguing intensely

All during the meeting one of the couples in your group seem to be trading shots at one another. This escalates in intensity until they actually begin a shouting match in front of the whole group. How do you handle this in a way best for the group and best for the couple?

#2 - Case Study in Crisis Moments

Someone announces they have cancer and fear for their life

One of the single people in your group has been uncharacteristically quiet for the entire evening. In the midst of prayer time they share that they underwent medical tests that revealed they have cancer and the prognosis is not good. They begin to weep as they finish sharing. What would be the appropriate way for you and your group to respond to this situation?

#3 - Case Study in Crisis Moments

Loss of a Job

During a conversation you engage in before the start of the meeting one of the men who is the father in a family with young children shares with you that he lost his job that week. He shares they face a real financial crisis as a family due to high medical bills for the wife. What's the best response on your part as a leader and how might your group be of help?

#4 - Case Study in Crisis Moments

Teen child discovered to be drug user

At the beginning of the evening you notice two of the women of the group huddled together on the couch speaking in low tones and one of them is weeping. As she shares several other women of the group begin surrounding her in sympathy. You discover that this single mom learned that week that her teen daughter is using drugs and she doesn't know what to do. How do you as a leader and your group as a whole minister to this woman?

These case studies demonstrate the kind of statement or request that throw a group or its leader for a loop and unless handled with compassion and tenderness it can be very awkward for everyone there.

Points to remember concerning handling crisis moments in a group meeting:

- People in crisis by definition have a certain loss of their normal means of coping with life. People report feeling numb; they can be emotionally unstable (unable to quit crying or laughing or some other expression of emotion) and they can display "odd" behavior associated with grief and loss. The thing to remember is that these are "normal" behaviors; especially when the crisis is fresh or ongoing.
- Acknowledge the pain by your telling them of your sorrow for their difficulty. Don't make statements like, "I know just how you feel." It doesn't help and they may respond with, "No you don't know how I feel." You or group members can ask simple questions and allow them to talk as they are able and want to.
- Offer the ministry of presence not handy scripture passages or "counseling." Just be there as a listening ear or silent presence as needed by them.
- Serve them in ways they want to be served. Ask, "Would it help if we...?"
- Follow up by phone or a quick note in the mail. Make sure to follow up with questions and prayer next at your group's next meeting. Write it down!
- Let this be a holy moment - possibly let this be the rest of the meeting or the end of the meeting
- End with prayer - with their permission have the group surround them and lay hands on them as several people pray.