

## **ENDING YOUR GROUP**

God's calling is never revoked, but where He calls us sometimes is.

My original calling as a new believer was to serve in children's ministry. I knew that I knew that I was called to serve kids, so when God called me into adult ministry, I was confused and torn. But as I sought His direction, He clearly helped me see that I was still 'called' but He was moving me into the next stage in my walk with Him.

My point – God does move some of us into different ministries and roles over the years. There are others He calls into an area of ministry for life. The key is knowing His voice and following His leading to serve WHEREVER He directs.

But one thing for certain... when He moves us out of a role, He does so with a plan.

You are probably reading this because you feel that God may be calling you to end your small group or class. Perhaps He is leading you into another ministry area. But let me point out, that we can see through scripture, God does things 'decently and in order' when it comes to the church.

In the past, we've had leaders end their groups with a smooth transition and the celebration of their group members. We've had others leave abruptly leaving behind hurt feelings and sometimes even a mistrust that keeps members from every trying another group!

We all know that connection in community is vital to our soul transformation, so we do not want to see any of our groups end without prayerful thought and consideration!

So we've set up some guidelines for you as leaders when you are ready to move on.

### **BEGIN BY TELLING YOUR COACH:**

Once you have clarity (*after prayer and hearing God's voice*) that it is time to step down, the next step is to ask your coach to pray with you about this and to work with you so that there is a smooth transition. Your coach can alert the rest of the Grace leadership so that all the changes in church records can be handled effectively.

### **REPLACING YOURSELF AS LEADER OF THE GROUP:**

Ideally, the group will continue after you've gone with a new leader in place. Many group members become close and want to stay together. The more you can do to help make that happen the better!

- **BEST SCENARIO:**

If you've been following the training you received, then you will already **have a co-leader or apprentice** in place. So you just follow these steps:

1. Talk to them about your plans and ask them to pray about taking over the leadership of the group.
2. Work together to set a time-frame for the transition. A co-leader may have already completed both membership and leader training and be ready to go! That will enable you to keep the transition period to a minimum. If not, that should be the first step – getting the co-leader through training.
3. Together you can announce to the group your decision to step down and assure them that this does not mean the end of the group as you share with them your co-leader's willingness to step up and lead. Let the group know when the transition will take place. It is usually best to do it at the end of a study and before beginning a new study.
4. Some leaders have found success in simply switching roles with the co-leader for a brief time... at least until they are feeling comfortable leading the group. This only works if you as a leader can learn to direct members to the co-leader. If you tend to jump in and take over, it would be better for you to leave sooner.
5. If possible, you might even be able to help this new leader select their own co-leader to mentor.
6. Then when things are running smooth, it is time for you to move on and move out of the group.

A transition like this is cause for celebration!

- **SECOND BEST SCENARIO:**

If you are **not mentoring a co-leader**, that means the prayer focus between you and your coach is a little different. You need to pray for another leader to rise up to take on the group AND pray for God to show you who that person is.

Once you know who that person is, then it is time to approach them

1. If they need to complete membership and leader training, you may need to delay your exit from the group to allow them time to complete these requirements.
2. You will need to pray about timing and letting the rest of the group know what is happening as you then go through the rest of the steps listed above.

- **THIRD SCENARIO:**

The third scenario is when you just don't seem to think there is any one **ready or willing** to take over. When this happens, it might be best to have your coach join you at the meeting

when you tell the group of your decision to step down. Be sure to be prepared to explain WHY you are ending your role as the group leader. The more they understand, the less chance they are likely to feel deserted.

1. You should ask the group members to pray and ask God if He might want them to take over the group. Perhaps give them a week to seek God.
2. Many leaders have been surprised to see that someone already had it on their heart and is excited to move into the new role. If that is the case, then you will simply need to follow the steps listed in BEST SCENARIO.
3. If no one is interested in taking over, then you and your coach can begin to help group members find a new group to join. Perhaps they will want to stick together – all of them trying out new groups together. The more you can do to facilitate each person's transition into a new group the better.
4. They need to feel loved and cared for by you. You are their current pastor. By helping them as a group or individually to connect in another group, you are displaying the loving care of a shepherd.

Hopefully, implementing these steps will help you move on to the next assignment our Father has for you! Please know your Division Leader, Division Director and assigned Pastor are always available to help!