

:HOSTS ONLY

TO: Hosts LOVE: The Copy Machine

HOST TIPS



Hello hosts.

Thanks for stepping forward to host a small group. As a host, you'll not only get a chance to be around other people as they grow, but you'll have the chance to grow significantly, yourself.

We're convinced that God will use the unique combination of weekend teaching, the personal guide, and engaging group discussions and activities to challenge all of us to a new place. As a small group host, you're a key link in all of this. (Think of yourselves as the group's Ryan Seacrest—you don't have to know what you're doing, you just have to smile and welcome people.)

Along with instructions for the group bag, we're also including tips on how to host and support your group, including how to handle conflict within the group and keep things rolling.

What is a Host?

Being a host means that you're willing to welcome a small group into your home—or another suitable location—for six weeks, at an agreed-upon time and place. You don't need to have all the answers, and we don't expect you to be a Bible expert or professional facilitator. Just be friendly, take a shower beforehand and put your crazy dog on a leash.

Your Responsibilities

1. Since you're reading these materials, you've probably already registered as a host at **www.consumedjourney.com**. If you haven't registered online, please do, so you'll be connected with the host community at large.
2. Read all these host tips to get familiar with the Consumed bag. Everything you need to host your group is in there.
3. If you haven't already, determine how you will form your group. You can form a new group or continue meeting with an existing serving team or small group.
 - If you are forming a new group, use the Find-A-Small-Group tool at www.consumedjourney.com to describe yourself and your group. People will be able to find your group online and contact you via e-mail.
 - If you plan to stay with a current small group or serving team, let them know your plans and be sure to sign yourself up as a host at www.consumedjourney.com.

Regardless of the method you've chosen to form your group, you'll want to contact them prior to your first meeting to confirm the time and location.

4. At your first meeting, be sure to review the *Small Group Ground Rules* (when directed to do so) and ask everyone to sign them. This can also be a good opportunity to discuss how your group will handle childcare, conflicting schedules, potty mouths, rabies, et cetera.
5. Before each meeting, be sure you've completed the appropriate week in your personal guide, and always bring your guide with you. The bag does reference the guide to some degree, and everyone is encouraged to have considered the material and challenges in the guide. As a host, you're the model.
6. If you have any questions during the Consumed series:
 - Check out the online Host Forum at www.consumedjourney.com.
 - E-mail host@consumedjourney.com for really nice support.
7. And have fun, of course.

About The Bag

Because you're the host, we'll let you in on a few of the Consumed bag's secrets. But pinkie-swear that this goes no further.

1. Your bag will be tied shut when you get it. **DON'T OPEN THE BAG UNTIL YOUR FIRST GROUP MEETING.** (This is really important.) Opening the bag is how you'll begin your group experience.
2. Don't spoil the fun by dropping hints about what's in the bag, just because we might sometimes give you clues.
3. The bag is not just a bag. It's like a clown car. So, inside it are materials for each of the six weeks, plus detailed instructions. But never open the next week's materials (which will be clearly labeled) until the appropriate time.
4. Keep the bag, or whatever comes out of the bag, in front of everyone.

Week One

When you're reading out loud, read slowly. (This is a hint for every week, but especially the first one, because there's a lot of set-up going on.) And make sure you have your guide with you, and a Bible on hand.

Week Two

Everything's self-explanatory. Just make sure you've done your own homework.

Week Three

Have scrap paper handy, and some sort of calendar (because as a group, you'll be discussing when and where your Week 6 gathering will take place).

Week Four

This week, your group will be asked to share thoughts and ideas about tithing. This is a time to be really sensitive to where people are (including yourself), without judging. Some will have tithed, some will have never even thought about it. Try to set an encouraging tone, so people feel comfortable and safe. (The materials will help you with this.)

Week Five

Everyone in the group will have had the chance to go to a prayer experience. You'll all be asked to talk about that experience—or another prayerful time that impacted you—and you'll be asked to share first. The group will also be instructed to pray together (although some groups might choose to do this every week). Be prepared to open and close the group in prayer. It's OK if you've never prayed out loud before. You can talk to God just like you'd talk to a friend. Simple and authentic is good; no need to plan out certain words.

Week Six

For your last group meeting, you'll be expected to share a meal together at someone's house (everyone will be told about this in the third week, so you should have time to plan in advance). Anyone can host the dinner, and anyone/everyone can cook for it. It's important to pick a night that everyone can attend and it's encouraged that parents get a babysitter for this evening.

Host Tips

Make It Safe

Your group should be a safe place for people, wherever they are on their spiritual journey. Be sure to respect any and all questions, and let everyone know they're welcome to explore the series topics, even if they don't agree with them.

Some people might uncover experiences in their past that elicit emotion, even strong emotions. Be respectful of them. People probably don't want to be "fixed" or given advice. Listen in an understanding way, and affirm them for their discovery and offer them a time out for others to continue, as appropriate.

Have Clear Expectations

Be sure that everyone knows your role as a host. You're there to help guide the discussion, but aren't the "teacher" or "Bible expert." If a question is asked about which the group would like more insight, try the Host Forum or contact host@consumedjourney.com before your next meeting.

Check to make sure that everyone in your group has a personal guide. The guide's purpose is to facilitate the individual piece of the journey. The guide also contains the Small Group Ground Rules. Be clear about these ground rules and ask that everyone commit to them and remind each other of them, if needed.

Group Discussion

Your group bag contains challenges, questions and instructions. It will help to facilitate your group meeting to a large extent, but we're making no promises that it will totally carry your group. It will be up to you to encourage open discussion and discern when it's time to keep going, and when it's time to move on. You are in charge of leading your group.

What If?

What if someone consistently breaks the ground rules of the group?

Your first step should be to talk one-on-one with the person away from the rest of the group. Remind them of the ground rules and how they can help you keep the group a positive experience for everyone. Focus your discussion on the "event" that happened.

If that doesn't work, sit down with the person and someone else from the group. If no meaningful changes occur after taking these steps, it would be appropriate to ask the person to step out of the group. This plan follows the guidance given in the Bible in Matthew 18:15-17. If you need more specific guidance on a situation, try the Host Forum or contact host@consumedjourney.com.

What if there's conflict within the group? What if a discussion turns into an argument?

Move the furniture against the walls and clear a large space in the center of your living room. Let the opposing parties fight it out, and whoever is left standing gets to be right. (Kidding.)

Seriously, there's a healthy principle that says, "What happens in the group needs to be resolved in the group." As host, your role is to remind everyone that the group needs to be a place that allows healthy disagreement, but not at the expense of respect for one another. This is a great opportunity to look at what the Bible has to say about disagreements. Have the group turn in their Bibles to Ephesians 4:15 to read about "speaking the truth in love," and to Ephesians 4:32 to read about "forgiving each other."

What if someone consistently dominates the conversation and there isn't room for others to talk?

This usually happens, and sometimes the chatty person is super nice, so you hate to say anything. But it will help. (Even as host, you might be tempted to carry a lot of the conversation. It's better to let everyone take equal part. Go for the "start-and-hand-off" approach.)

Consider following up with the chatty guy outside the group time. Ask him to be intentional about holding back so less-vocal members can participate more easily. If it happens again, step in diplomatically and say something like, "Dave, we've heard from you on this, but let's hear from others in the group who haven't had a chance to share..."

What if someone in the group experiences a crisis?

This is what community is about. It's not all fun and salty snacks. It's being there for someone when they're hurting. Your first step is to see if there's a way that the group as a whole can be of help. For instance, if the person is in the hospital, you could call the other members to see if they can visit on different days, or split up help in a way that one person is not responsible for everything.

What if I'm a parent or there are parents in my group?

Your small group experience will include serious discussion, prayer and some surprises. And it will almost certainly be boring for young kids. Parents are encouraged to investigate babysitting options (some groups even share a group sitter). Every situation is different, so talk it over in your group and decide what's best for everyone.

It's important to note that "community-wide journey" means that everyone can be included, and just as the adults are learning, children's and teen ministries are exploring the Consumed journey as well. Additionally, the personal guide contains ideas for families to learn together.

What if my group decides to meet early in the week or immediately after the weekend service?

The bag is designed to work best when individual group members have attended the weekend service and completed their individual reading in the Bible and the guide. However, some schedules demand that groups meet on Monday or even Sunday nights, not affording everyone time to complete their weekly reading. If this is the case for your group, it's best to suck it up and complete the individual reading right away, or choose to work a week behind, affording an entire week for individual study and experiments.

After the Consumed Series**How Was It?**

Please encourage your group to complete a brief survey that will be made available after the series at www.consumedjourney.com so we can know what worked and what didn't. Also, you might have someone in your group (including you) that now has a story of life change resulting from participating in the journey. Make sure to let others know at www.consumedjourney.com. Keep the stories coming!

To Meet or Not to Meet

If you formed your group specifically for this series, you might discover that some people in your group would like to continue meeting. Great! This is just one way that small groups are born. But it's entirely possible that not everyone wants to continue meeting. That's OK, too. Either way, be prepared to discuss this at your last meeting. Encourage the group that if some want to start a small group, that's wonderful, but no one is under any pressure to do so. After the series, we'll put some other small group studies in the www.consumedjourney.com site, so check those out.