

“What are you trying to do in your group?”

There are other ways to ask this question. Two great alternatives are: “What will you call success?” and, “What will you call a win?” Any way you slice it though, what you’re really asking is, “What is the purpose of this group?”

Why is this important? Why does it come first? It comes first because the values and norms of the group must be aligned with the purpose or you end up with a mess. What are some possible purposes?

- We exist to provide a safe environment to share our lives.
- We want to help each other grow spiritually.
- We want to be an easy first step for our non-Christian neighbors and friends.
- We like to eat pie.

I can’t tell you what your group’s purpose needs to be, but I can tell you that without clearly defined purpose—a win—you can’t answer the question of whether or not your group should be ‘open’ [let new people in at any time] or ‘closed’ [new people are not invited].

Here’s how I personally answer the open or closed question.

1. The main purpose of our group system is to make followers of Jesus.
2. A secondary purpose is to connect people relationally.
3. Part of becoming a follower of Jesus is learning to set aside my interests for the sake of others.
4. Therefore, the group shouldn’t be *just* about me and my needs.
5. “Come over to my house” is almost always easier than “come with me to church.”
6. Therefore, setting my own interests aside might include inviting *my* friends and neighbors to my group.
7. It is never easier to connect the friends and neighbors of the newest members of the congregation than in the first 3 to 6 months.

Therefore, setting my own interests aside might include encouraging the newest members of the group to invite *their* friends and neighbors.