

- The emphasis of the meal is the fellowship and not the food. The conversation at the table should be in such a manner that the guests feel welcome.
- When conversation just doesn't get going and/or the people don't know each other well, a few simple questions can help break the ice. These so-called ice breaking questions should be easy for someone to answer. In the appendix you will find a list of good ice breaking questions.

Element #2 Singing (10 minutes)

Singing together plays an important role in the Bible. The Psalms were originally written as songs, which God's people sang again and again to express their adoration. It wasn't any different in the church in the New Testament. Paul wrote to the Colossians: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." (Colossians 3:16) Singing plays an important role in a CARE group, because it is a form of worship and creates a feeling of fellowship. Here are some tips about how to sing together:

- It is important to sing the songs consciously with heart and mind. A few introductory words to the song are often helpful in creating this awareness.
- It is wise to choose for the last song something that has a text that coincides with the Bible study topic.
- Between songs, praise and thanks can be shared.
- It is important to have enough song books.
- Choose well-known and favorite songs, which the guests can easily learn and enjoy singing.
- It is important that the songs have instrumental accompaniment.
- The CARE group can choose a theme song, which is sung each time. A theme song creates a sense of belonging.
- Purposely choose to learn new songs to increase your repertoire.
- Also sing songs that are sung at church. This helps our friends feel comfortable when they come to church.
- Also sing Bible verses set to music. There is no better method of memorizing Bible verses.
- The CARE group can also practice songs, which they then perform at church. This creates an opportunity for our friends to visit church.

Element #3 Bible Study (30-40 minutes)

After singing start the Bible study with a short prayer. In the next lesson we will look in detail on how to make a Bible study a profitable experience.

Element #4 Sharing (10-15 minutes)

After the Bible study divide up into small groups in order to share and pray with each other. We already shared some during the meal, but after the worship people tend to be more willing to talk about deeper concerns.

- Dividing up into small groups of around 4 people is important because it induces more openness.

- It is important that the group members divide themselves up evenly among the small groups.
- It is good to keep pretty much the same small groups each week so that intimacy and openness can grow and they can pray over weeks or months for certain prayer requests.
- We ask two questions during sharing, which each person can answer:
 - How was your week?
 - What can we pray about for you?
- Sharing should be deep and genuine. The leader begins by answering the questions himself and shows through example that sharing doesn't only have to do with inconsequential things, but rather with things that really concern us.
- Everyone may speak about their concerns and joys. It's not a shame to speak about our challenges and weaknesses for which we need God's help and need intercession.
- When someone tells about a challenge they are facing, encourage them with a Bible promise.
- Speak openly about what you have experienced with God or what you are thankful for.
- It is important to listen carefully and not forget any prayer requests while praying.
- The sharing time should be short and practical.
- Encourage each person to take part. But respect the decision of a guest who doesn't feel ready to say something.
- It is good if each small group keeps record of the prayer requests in a small book. In this way we won't forget to pray for these items during the week. But before you write the prayer request down, it is important to ask the person if it is ok for you to write it down.

Element #5 Prayer Together (10-15 minutes)

After everyone has shared you should pray together. Jesus gave a wonderful promise about praying together: "Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them." (Matthew 18:19-20)

- Use the family prayer style, i.e. use short sentence prayers. Each person will get a chance to pray more than once, it is easier to follow the prayers, and we will be less likely to start thinking about other things. In addition, this style encourages the guests to join in the prayer.
- Just as Jesus taught us in the Lord's Prayer we should start with praise and thanks before going on to the requests.
- During prayer also think about the Bible topic that was studied. Some praise and prayer requests can arise out of a topic.
- Encourage your guests to pray, but don't pressure them. Each person may pray, but not one everyone has to.
- It is important to pray specifically, so that we can specifically experience God's answers to our prayers. Prayer together is a chance for our guests to see that God really exists and acts.

- When prayer requests have been made it is important to ask about them the next week. Has the prayer been answered? Should we continue to pray about it?
- When God has answered a prayer we should thank Him in our prayers as well.
- The CARE group meeting closes in the small groups. This provides an opportunity for groups to take more time if needed and lessens the pressure of ending at a specific time.

Challenge

1. Continue to pray for the people on your prayer list and keep your eyes open for the opportunity to bless them and give them spiritual impulses.
2. Pray together for the friends on your joint prayer list, who you want to invite to the CARE group.
3. Keep on looking for ideas to spend meaningful time with your friends.

