The Wonderful World of Hobbies

Facilitator Instructions: Keep the group together for this sharing exercise. Ask people to think of a hobby that they have now or have had in the past. It should be something that they enjoy or have fun doing. Once people have had a moment to think about it, ask each person to share their hobby and to tell everyone what made the hobby particularly enjoyable for them. After everyone has had the chance to share, ask the group to reflect about what was shared by discussing these questions:

Question #1: What makes hobbies so enjoyable for us?

Question #2: What makes a hobby worthwhile or worth pursuing?

After you have reflected together, simply point out that God has given each one of us unique interests. What we pursue for a hobby says a lot about our unique make-up. Today’s session is going to explore the idea of starting groups with people who share similar interests.

After this, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector by the name of Levi sitting at his tax booth. “Follow me,” Jesus said to him, and Levi got up, left everything and followed him. Then Levi held a great banquet for Jesus at his house, and a large crowd of tax collectors and others were eating with them. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law who belonged to their sect complained to his disciples, “Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?” Jesus answered them, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.”

Debrief
Lead the whole room in a discussion from this passage.

Question #1: What impresses you about Matthew (Levi) from this passage?

Question #2: What evangelism “principles” do we see operating in this passage?

Bill Hybels and Mark Mittelberg put it this way in Becoming a Contagious Christian:
So if we’re going to impact our world for Christ, the most effective approach will be through friendships with those who need to be reached. We’ll have to get close to them so that they can see that we genuinely care about them individually and that we have their best interests in mind. Over time that will earn their trust and respect. (1994:97)

The Power of Interest Groups
Facilitator Instructions: Encourage everyone to slowly read through the article entitled The Power of Interest Groups.

The Power of Interest Groups
There is a group of guys in Colorado Springs who get together for fly-fishing every couple of weeks. Early Saturday morning, they meet at one member’s home, load gear and food into an SUV, and head into the mountains. Once at the river, they pile out of the car, pull on their waders, sort through flies and rods, and venture into the cool Colorado stream.
Starting Interest Groups

To the other fishermen on the river, these guys look like everyone else. They search out a promising hole, cast back and forth, and wait for the snag on their lines that signals a bite. They talk and laugh and enjoy the beauty of the outdoors. But these guys aren’t just out for a day of fly-fishing. They aren’t just recreating. They’re connecting through their local church. In fact, they are holding an officially registered New Life Church Small Group.

At the same time, back in town, people all over the city are meeting for all kinds of different activities. A dog-training group gathers in the city park. Aspiring writers meet in a home to read and to discuss their works, a financial expert coaches a group of married couples on money management, and teenagers meet downtown to serve at the homeless shelter. Men pour into a basketball gym for a pick-up game, and women sit drinking coffee and discussing the latest best-selling book at the bagel shop.

What’s going on here? These aren’t community groups, although they don’t look like church groups, either....This seems odd, right? After all, what do fly-fishing, dog training, and eating bagels have to do with sharing Christ? They are ministry, and this ministry perfectly expresses what the Bible is all about: loving God and loving others...The way I see it, effective ministry is powerfully connecting with God and people--living life better through biblical relationships.

(from Dog Training, Fly Fishing, and Sharing Christ In the 21st Century by Ted Haggard, Thomas Nelson Publishers, p. 5)

In 1 Thessalonians 2:8, Paul expresses the genius of Christianity when he states, “We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the Gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us.” It was Paul’s willingness to share his life with the Thessalonians that brought feet, hands and heart to the Gospel message. As it was in the first century, so it is today.

Have you ever creatively considered that God has given you a hobby, an interest, or a passion for a reason, and that reason may be that He wants you to share it with others, both inside and outside the church? That’s right--there is tremendous power when people link up around a shared interest. It’s fun, it’s relaxing, it’s relational, it’s not hard to get motivated...etc., etc. Some of your friends might not come to church with you, but they would go fishing, or to the bowling alley, or to a coffee shop, or for a ride in the hills. So take the church to them by starting an interest group.
New Life Church found that when they encouraged their people to consider starting Interest Groups a number of exciting possibilities opened up. The leadership of the church simply asked that each group be willing to do one of four things at each meeting: worship, prayer, Bible study, or a short testimony. They found that this was a realistic requirement for almost any group setting. And every group understood that their primary purpose was to be a relationship building environment and to simply help people move one step closer to God.

Debrief
After everyone has read the article, discuss its contents with a few questions:

Question #1: What stood out to you from the article?

Question #2: What do you like about the concept of Interest Groups?

Question #3: As you were reading, did any possible interest groups emerge in your thinking?

Application Activity

Facilitator Instructions: After the discussion of the article, turn to the page that lists Interest Group ideas and the related “What If” worksheet. Give everyone 5-7 minutes to work through this individually and then move to the Wrap-Up sharing time. Highlight the point that this session’s purpose is to get people thinking, praying and planning to try starting some kind of interest group in the near future.
Starting Interest Groups

What Interests and Hobbies Do You Have?
- Sewing
- Quilting
- Cooking
- Genealogy
- Painting
- Gardening
- Scrap-booking
- Travel

What Interests, Hobbies, Life Skills, or Professional Skills Do You Have?
- Guitar
- Voice
- Drums
- Brass Instruments
- Piano
- Quartet
- Composing
- Listening

What Interests or Hobbies Do You Have?
- Basketball
- Softball
- Running
- Camping/Fishing
- Aerobics
- Running
- Weight Training
- Golf

What Life Skills, or Professional Skills Do You Have?
- Budgeting
- Financial Planning
- Getting Out of Debt
- Finances and Marriage
- Job Transition
- Business Leaders

What “Study” Interests Do You Have?
- Book Study
- Life Study
- Support Group
- Recovery Group
- Prayer Group
- Need related study
- Movic critics club

What Needs are You Interested in Meeting in the Community?
- Homeless Ministry
- Prison Ministry
- Nursing Home
- Spanish
- Sign Language
- Community Action/Service
“What If” Possibilities

Assignment: Using the “Shared Interests” concept, brainstorm possible interest groups that would be attractive to people who are being drawn toward Christ. Try to generate at least ten new possibilities. Feel free to refer to the previous page which is filled with various ideas to get you thinking.

Key questions:
Question #1: What interests or hobbies do I have that non-Christians would share with me?

Question #2: What life or professional skills do I have that would help me build relationships with unbelievers?

Question #3: What life challenges am I currently facing or have faced in the past that non-Christians could relate to?

Brainstorming Possibilities:

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Wrap-Up

Facilitator Instructions: Once everyone has done some preliminary thinking about interest groups, direct their attention to the Interest Group Planning Worksheet. Give individuals another 5-10 minutes to think through the worksheet. After each person has had time to brainstorm by themselves (about interest groups and the planning worksheet), ask them to share their ideas in groups of 3-4. If the group is small enough, consider keeping everyone together.

Interest Group Planning Worksheet

What kind of Interest Group(s) are you potentially interested in considering?

Who do you know (inside and outside the church) that might be interested in this kind of group? Who would you like to invite? Is there anyone who might want to partner with you in getting the group started?

When would the group meet and for how long each time? When could you have your first meeting?

Where would the group meet?

What are some challenges or obstacles you might face in launching an Interest Group?

What next steps can you take in the next 30 days toward starting an Interest Group?