

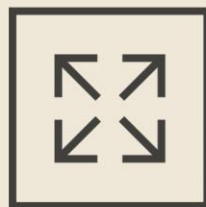
HOME GROUP MANUAL



**UPWARD
IN WORSHIP**



**INWARD
IN DISCIPLESHIP**



**OUTWARD
IN IMPACT**



GREAT HILLS
BAPTIST CHURCH

Edited August 2021

HOME GROUP MANUAL

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Dear Home Group Leadership Team,

There are two essential characteristics of an effective leader:

- You know where you are leading people.
- You know why you are leading them there.

This leadership manual will help you know where you are leading people and why you are leading them. Take time to read through the manual. The guidelines provided will help you because they will provide a framework through which you can lead effectively.

Our prayer for you and your Home Group is to experience life transformation through the truth of the Bible and Christian community that will encourage you as a follower of Jesus Christ.

Thank you for serving on your Home Group Leadership Team!

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Three Guiding Principles

We have formed a pathway to help guide each of us in discovering more about what God wants to do in and through us. We are to focus Upward in Worship, Inward in Discipleship, and Outward in Impact.

Upward In Worship

We love God and want to grow closer to Him. God has given us complete access to Him through believing in His Son, Jesus Christ. We understand that worship isn't something we do one day a week, but rather it's how we live life 24/7 (see Romans 12:1).

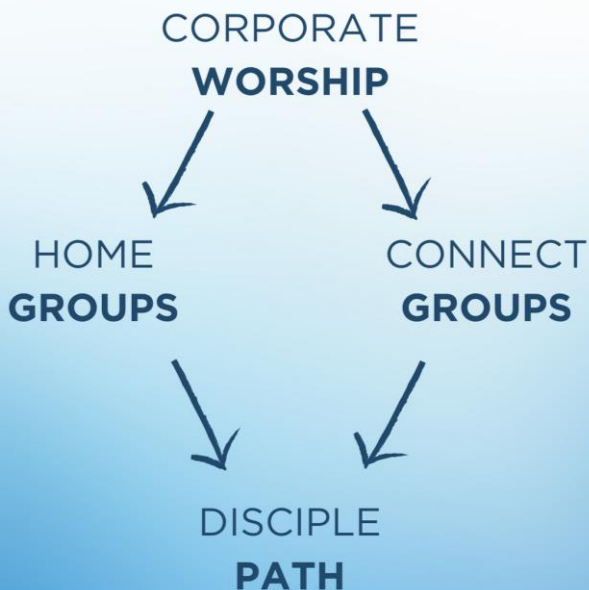
Inward in Discipleship

We believe the Bible and seek to know how it practically applies to every aspect of life. We understand that this happens best in community with other Christians. We want to encourage one another and be accountable to one another for how we live our lives (see Hebrews 10:24-25).

Outward in Impact

Faith is what you believe, but it is also what you do. We believe in missional living and making the most of the gifts God has given us. We continually search for ways to impact our community and our world with the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ (see Matthew 28:19-20).

ENGAGE IN COMMUNITY



The Christian walk is one we simply cannot live out alone. Christianity is a team sport. A “go it alone philosophy” is unbiblical. We all need the church to successfully be a disciple and to make disciples.

“Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.” (1 Corinthians 12:27).

Why Home Groups?

Walking through the doors of a church can feel intimidating to some, especially if they do not know anyone. A lost or unchurched co-worker, neighbor, or friend is more likely to come to a group meeting in a home. An effective Home Group provides a non-threatening environment for people to know and experience the love of God through the community of the church. It fosters a meaningful relationship with others, hopefully beginning or renewing a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Jesus himself gave us the model to follow, when he chose 12 men and did life with them for three years, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. He knew that the best way for people to learn about God and how to live out the teachings of the Bible is with a small group of people who build trusted relationships and support one another in the experiences of life.

Jesus gave his disciples this command: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind, and with all your strength. The second is this: Love your neighbor as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these." (Mark 12:30-31).

Jesus' disciples learned to live out these commands by following Jesus' example as they shared life with each other each day. A Home Group, although it does not meet together daily, should provide a fertile atmosphere for personal spiritual discipleship. It should encourage each member to obey Jesus'

commands in Mark 12, whether a person is a newborn Christian or a seasoned believer. In a Home Group, you should always find: safe environments for learning and sharing; accountability for living what is learned; meaningful relational connections; opportunities for loving and serving; and encouragement about becoming a disciple maker.

Before leaving the earth, Jesus gave another command to his disciples. He said, "Therefore go, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them . . . and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." (Matthew 28:19-20).

An effective Home Group will also follow this command from Jesus, and provide a true understanding of salvation, baptism, active membership in a local church, and disciple making. As Home Groups develop their structure around these two scriptural commands from our Lord Jesus, group members will experience life transformation.

Imagine something small, starting something big. It happened once when a simple carpenter shared his life with twelve friends. As they did life together, their lives were changed, and then they went out and did the same, changing the world.

Scriptural Basis for Home Groups

The scripture passages below emphasize meeting in homes, the importance of a common belief, sharing meals, praying together, the apostles' teaching, sharing the Gospel and meeting the needs of others. In our Home Groups, we want to do the same.

"And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved."
(Acts 2:42-47).

In the home:

- They experienced teaching & fellowship.
- They prayed together.
- They ate meals together.
- They shared the Gospel.
- They met the needs of others.

“And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus.” (Acts 5:42).

- Jesus is to be shared at church and home.
- The Gospel is to be taught and preached at church and at home.

“...how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable and teaching you in public and from house to house.” (Acts 20:20).

- Speak that which is profitable in public and at home.
- Boldly speak and teach the Word in public and at home.

Group Comparison

Characteristics	Campus Connect Group	Home Group
Type	Open; people can join at any time	Recommend a cap of 12 people
Setting	Classroom, limited by space and design	Home or apartment; informal
Length	45-60 minutes	90-120 minutes
Arrangement	Chairs in a row or tables and chairs	Circle seating; relaxed
Structure	Moderate to high	Low to moderate
Tone	Friendly and somewhat informal	Informal, relational, more intimate
Format Accountability	Instruction/ Discussion led by a teacher Simple attendance	Interactive/ Discussion and open dialogue led by a leader/teacher Engaging Input encouraged
Curriculum	Systematic study of scripture passages	Systematic study of scripture passages
Leadership	Focused on schedule and on teaching for life transformation	Focused on relationship and teaching for life transformation
Primary Benefits	Sunday mornings before/after worship; children and student groups provided	Flexible time and location; more relational setting
Size	12-50	8-12

Home Group Essentials

Think of Life Change

A Home Group should create an environment where participants experience authentic community, spiritual growth, and biblical multiplication. It is an environment where God is present and active, resulting in life change and transformation. Leaders should always focus on Biblical truth, be good managers of time, keep the group focused on its purposes, guide discussion and encourage authentic relationships.

Cultivate Authentic Relationships

Just because you are meeting in a home does not mean there will be meaningful relationships. Building relationships must be intentional. It doesn't just happen. A Home Group leader should create opportunities that encourage relationship building every time the group meets. Occasional group activities outside of the regular meeting time and format are very effective. We want people to share their lives and meet each other's needs.

Promote Participation

Every Home Group leader should know that shared responsibility creates broader ownership of the group. Allow the spiritual giftedness of group members to be used to bless and advance the group. Participation gives a member a sense of purpose and belonging that keeps them active and committed. All group members should be encouraged to participate

often in facilitating and engaging in the group meeting.

Replace Yourself

Reproducing leadership is a crucial element that Jesus himself modeled with His disciples. Within the first few weeks of your Home Group meeting, the leader should identify those in the group who have the potential for future leadership. The leader should begin to mentor this person with the idea that this person can successfully carry the leadership role, not just be an assistant. In turn, the Home Group will be equipped to reproduce and multiply in the future.

Provide Care

Care is a significant component of your Home Group. A leader should lead his group to build caring relationships for one another. Caring relationships develop by meeting the needs of the group physically, emotionally, and spiritually. It is always good to identify someone with that caring giftedness to keep the group aware of prayer requests and needs. Leadership must weave the mindset of loving and caring for one another into the group. Caring and relationship building go hand in hand. The opportunity to care for one another will probably begin in your first meeting.

Multiply Influence

Multiplying your Home Group opens the door for others to participate in group life. People all around us are searching for meaningful relationships. As the leader releases the mentored to lead a new Home Group, the opportunity is made possible for a whole

new group of people to experience the life-changing power of Jesus Christ through their own Home Group. Leadership should communicate this concept of multiplication early and often to keep everyone in the group on track.

Beyond the Home Group – Disciple Path

In Matthew 28:19, Jesus gives His followers this command, “Therefore, go and make disciples.” How did they know how to make disciples? They knew how because they had been living, listening, watching, and learning from Jesus over the past three years of their lives. Jesus modeled for them how to make disciples. Now He was asking them to go and do the same. Jesus’ command to go and make disciples extends to us today. Jesus wants every follower of his to be a disciple-maker. We invite you to take the next step and become a member of a Disciple Path Group. This group will be much smaller. It will include a leader and three other members of the same gender. A Disciple Path Group will guide you through the same process that Jesus used to train his disciples. Once your training is complete, you will be released to become a disciple-maker. Your Home Group Leader can guide you to someone who can help you take this next step.

Organizing a Home Group

Who will lead the group?

Firstly, a Home Group must have a leader. The pastoral leadership must approve individuals interested in being a Home Group leader. Those approved will be trained and equipped to be able to serve as a Home Group leader effectively.

Where will the Home Group meet?

The Home Group will meet in the home of a church member who is usually a member of the Home Group.

Who will be members of the Home Group?

Home Group members will be between 8-12 people, with 12 being the maximum. The group should launch with at least 4-6 people, preferably those with established relationships. The remainder may be made up of church members, co-workers, neighbors, or casual acquaintances. Don't limit your invitation to just those people you know or with whom you feel comfortable. Pray for the Lord to lead you to those you should invite.

Joining a Home Group

We highly recommend joining a Home Group within 10 minutes of your residence. To join a Home Group, one must agree with and sign the Home Group Membership Covenant found on page 17. Things that may prevent someone from becoming a member are their inability to commit to the meeting time, living

too far from the host home, or not agreeing to the terms of the Membership Covenant.

What about childcare?

There are several options: If the group agrees, children can participate in every part of the Home Group meeting with their parents. If the home you are meeting in has a playroom or other area that can be closed off to avoid interruption to your group meeting, onsite childcare is an option. If the home you are meeting in does not have sufficient space for childcare, we suggest choosing another group member's home and dropping the children at that home before coming to the group meeting. Two other options include: You may choose to set up a meeting rotation and care for the children yourselves, or you may pool monies and hire one or two trusted childcare workers to love and care for their children during the group meeting. Anyone responsible for the care of the children must undergo a background check and complete "Ministry Safe" training. Training will also be given to every childcare worker to incorporate a fun and creative teaching time for the children, paralleling truths taught in the adult Home Group.

How often and when do we meet?

The leadership should determine meeting days and times after receiving feedback from the members of the group. We recommend meeting once each week or no less than two times per month. The day and time of the meeting are most often determined by the leader, especially if the group is meeting in the leader's home. If the group is meeting in a group

member's home, the leader and group members work together to decide when to meet. It is always wise to know the day, time, and location of your meeting before you begin to invite people to be members of your group.

What about food and drink?

You have several options: potluck, snacks, desserts, or drinks only, but refreshments are suggested. The leader should get an overall consensus from the group members about what they would like to do. It is always good to identify a group member who is the "social organizer" and then give them the responsibility of organizing the plan for each week. Food and drink of some kind always help move a group toward conversation and relationship building. Be sure that this is always well organized.

What about curriculum?

The curriculum for Home Groups is chosen by the Pastoral Staff and will be the same as the curriculum for our Campus Connect Groups. Once selected by the Pastoral Staff, the church will provide the curriculum for all group participants. On occasion, the Lead Pastor may request that all groups focus on a specific church-wide study of his choice, but this is infrequent.

Home Group Format Template

Here is a suggested schedule that you might like to use:

Meeting Agenda:

We recommend a one-and-a-half-hour meeting. Budget your time according to the set length of your meeting.

1. Relationship with one another: General conversation; Ice Breakers; Meal/snacks; Good personal interaction.

2. Relationship with God: Worship in song (Optional), scripture reading, and prayer.

3. God relating to us: This is the time to discuss your group Bible study.

- Interact with God's word.
- Incorporate interactive discussion questions.
- Address the life application of the study.

4. Missional Living: How can we share and serve this week?

Missional Projects—Serving Together

"It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."
(Matthew 20: 26-28).

- Jesus teaches that service is not an option. It is God's heart and Jesus' example.
- We must move from our comfort to meet the needs of the hurting world around us.
- Plan 2-4 local missional projects that allow everyone in your Home Group to serve together within the year. If you need suggestions, talk with your Home Group Pastor or your church Missions Director.

HOME GROUP MEMBER COVENANT

As we begin, we must covenant together, agreeing to live out important group values. If we all agree on these values, we will be on our way to experiencing true Christian community and becoming the Christians that God wants us to be.

Purpose—To focus on and experience biblical discipleship using the methodology of a relational environment in a Home Group that results in personal spiritual growth.

Relationships—Prayer and study of scripture will be a vital element of the group session, but building relationships is a unifying force behind the group.

Priority—While we are in this group, we will give our group meetings priority. Any absence should be reported to the group as far in advance as possible.

Participation—Everyone is expected to complete the biblical study for the week, participate, and contribute while no one dominates.

Respect—Everyone is given the right to their own opinions, but group members should never say anything that will embarrass other group members.

Use "I" Statements—It's easy to talk about the issues of others, but for our purposes, we want you to put yourself on the table. Avoid using words like "we," "us," "them," "the church," etc. Use "I" statements.

Authenticity—God created us with a relational need for others. For spiritual growth to take place, honesty, openness, and transparency from each person are encouraged.

Confidentiality—If authenticity is to occur in our Home Group meetings, members must be able to trust that issues discussed within the group will not be shared outside the group without permission.

Advice—Hear what people are sharing without trying to fix them. If advice is requested, carefully respond. We are in this group to support one another.

Life Change—I will regularly assess my spiritual progress toward applying the lessons learned from our biblical study each week.

Multiplication—All group members should recognize that one of the group's goals is to start a new group within 18 to 24 months. This will foster growth and allow for others to experience a Home Group relationship.

I covenant together with the other members of this group to honor this agreement.

Group Member's Signature

APPENDIX

Home Group Teacher/Leader

Prerequisites:

- You must be an active member of GHBC.
- Complete a Home Group Leader application.
- You must complete leadership training.

Responsible to: Home Group Pastor and Your Coach

Responsibilities:

- Uphold the teachings of the Bible, fully support the Baptist Faith and Message, and the Constitution and By-Laws of GHBC.
- Maintain an active daily relationship with God.
- Pray for and coordinate weekly/bi-weekly meetings.
- Teach/facilitate the curriculum selected for the group.
- Identify and mentor an apprentice leader to multiply the group.
- Delegate group responsibilities to other committed members of the group.
- Pray regularly for your Home Group members.
- Be available to spiritually support and encourage group members outside of the designated meeting time.
- Encourage group members to identify, develop and use their spiritual gifts.

- Lead community missional projects.
- Attend Home Group leadership training events.
- Begin your Home Group with the goal of creating a new Home Group from your group within 18-24 months.
- 2 Timothy 2:15

Home Group Prayer/Care Coordinator

General Description

The Prayer/Care Home Group Coordinator keeps up with the needs of each member and works with the group leader to guide the group in praying for and meeting those needs.

Qualities of an Effective Prayer/Care Home Group Coordinator

- Has sincere compassion for people.
- Is effective in loving and caring for group members and seeing that needs are met.
- Regularly communicates needs and prayer requests to all members of the group.

Specific Responsibilities

- Develop a method to collect and distribute group prayer requests each week.
- Gather weekly prayer requests and send them out to group members for weekly intercession.
- Coordinate meals and the meeting of other needs for those who are experiencing a crisis.

- Maintain close contact with group members in need.
- Pray regularly for the needs within your group.

"But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?" (1 John 3:17).

Home Group Social Coordinator

General Description

The Home Group Social Coordinator works with the group leader to build community by planning and implementing social activities.

Qualities of an Effective Home Group Social Coordinator

- Administrative and a good organizer.
- Loves people and is fun-loving.
- Loves having a good time.

Specific Responsibilities

- Develops a plan for providing group refreshments.
- Coordinates with all group members the plan for refreshments for each group meeting.
- Knows group members and utilizes their abilities.
- Works with the group leader and other group members to coordinate and plan regular social events.

- Ensures that all members are notified about every social event.
- Prays for every social event.
- Interacts positively with group members and guests.
- Encourages relationship building during the events.
- Acts 2:46

Home Group Leadership Styles

Which one are you? Which one works best?

Autocratic Characteristics

- Maintains total control, treating group members as listeners and followers.
- Determines goals and policies.
- Is more interested in subject matter (content) than in people (process).
- Makes all decisions, disregarding others' views.
- Talks too much.
- Focuses attention on self.
- Regards group members as puppets.
- Asks and answers all questions.

Authoritative Characteristics

- Maintains firm control yet actively involves members in the discussions.
- Has a definite purpose and plan but is open to modification.

- Is active and energetic and seeks the involvement of others.
- Is prepared to give necessary direction and support.
- Uses communication skills to involve others.
- Takes responsibility until others can assume it.
- Uses personal power to empower others.
- Prepares and asks questions, then elicits members' responses.

Nonassertive Characteristics

- Exercises minimal control, allowing members to direct.
- Doesn't prepare; lets discussion drift.
- Doesn't seem to care.
- Causes the group to accomplish very little.
- Encourages fragmentation through lack of discipline.
- Does not attempt to regulate events.
- Lacks courage in making plans.
- Asks general questions, then is silent.

Democratic Characteristics (Works Best)

- Shares control with members.
- Shares leadership responsibility.
- Believes in other people.
- Creates a sense of security and belonging.
- Ensures that others have leadership opportunities.
- Makes sure that if he withdraws, the group will not fall apart.

- Sees that the group discusses all policies.
- Involves others in leading the Bible study.

Helps for Leading a Home Group

Use Sharing Questions

When everyone arrives at the beginning of your meeting, please encourage them to ask questions that permit people to talk about themselves. Doing so will help in the relationship-building process. A few sample questions are listed below:

- Have you lived in this area very long?
- Are you going to school or working?
- What type of work do you do?
- Tell me about your family.
- Do you have a favorite coffee shop?
- What do you like to do for fun?
- How did you hear about this group?
- Why are you coming to the group?

Recognize

Each member of your Home Group has a part to play. Never do anything that group members can do themselves. Allow members to contribute and take responsibility.

Stop—Look—Listen

Stop on time. Look at the group's reactions. Listen to who dominates the conversation. Keep control of your group. Adjust as you need to.

Use Humor

Natural humor builds cohesion and breaks the tension. Make humor your ally.

Be Creative

Use creativity in planning all areas of your Home Group and activities. For example, place an empty chair to symbolize a person the group wants to win to Christ. Pray for a person you would like to occupy that chair.

A group that is resistant, antagonistic, or hostile. Analyze members' abilities. Assess the most beneficial role for each member and support members who assume suitable roles. Remind the group of their purpose. Be creative in using people's gifts.

Know the Stages of a Group's Growth

- Pre-covenant stage when members are first invited to participate.
- Orientation stage, explanation for the group, and introduction of the Membership Covenant.
- Decision stage, signing the covenant and establishing the permanent group.
- Growing stage, building and developing relationships.
- Trust stage, a time of belonging and unity.
- Change stage, preparing to multiply and form a new group.
- New beginning.

Conflict Resolution

Here are some steps to help deal with conflict:

- Confront the conflict when it is small, instead of waiting until it grows larger.
- Try to deal with issues and not personalities.
- Recognize others' feelings and concerns.
- Focus on facts instead of what someone is attempting to manipulate.
- Maintain a trusting and friendly attitude.
- Clarify whether one or several issues must be dealt with and deal with one issue at a time.
- Have all parties in the conflict at one meeting (other than a Home Group meeting), and reason with all.
- Pray before the meeting. Avoid criticism, gossip, and judgment.

Handling interruptions

Anticipate interruptions and plan the meeting in such a way as to minimize them. When interruptions occur, give them simple recognition, and go on. Remember, not all interruptions are bad; some might represent learning opportunities. An example of a divine interruption may be a phone call telling of a group member in the hospital. Lead the group in how to respond to this need.

A bad idea is offered; never totally reject the idea. Try to isolate the negative and explore the good in the idea. Affirm the idea giver, even though you might not fully agree with the idea.

Overcoming Common Home Group Problems

Some of the skills needed in effective Home Group meetings involve problem-solving. Every group has problems. Some common ones with possible solutions are:

A member who will not participate. Try to involve him in a conversation. Observe his involvement and listen with interest to what he says. Devote some time to him outside your regular meeting, one-on-one. When he does take part in the group, make a special note of it: "That's a good point, Paul. I appreciate your input." Give this person eye contact.

A member is dominating the conversation. The most diplomatic way of handling a person who talks too much is to review the Participation guidelines in your Home Group Membership Covenant with the whole group. If this does not work, you will need to speak to the person one-on-one. Stay positive. Show appreciation for their comments. Emphasize the importance of allowing everyone time to share.

A member who is argumentative and obstinate. Keep your temper, and do not let the group get tense and excited. Examine what he says carefully and try to find the good in it. You might privately explain that his view is important, but he must not destroy the group's effectiveness by his insistence. Visit one-on-one and find out if there is a personal problem.

The group is confused and complains that they have been wasting time. Provide agendas and systematic approaches to the discussion. Make sure a clear, constructive purpose is achieved at each meeting.

Group apathy. Find out if you have overlooked any essential aspects of the group's life together. Identify what is missing. Display enthusiasm and energy until the group catches it.

"It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."
(Matthew 20:26-28).

Ice Breakers

WHO AM I? Give each person in your group an index card or a small piece of paper. Ask them each to write one short (10-15 word) message about who they are. Instruct them not to identify themselves by writing their names on the cards. Next, have them turn in the cards, shuffle them, and pass them out so that each person gets another person's card. Take turns having each person read aloud what their card says, and have the group guess who wrote it.

MOVE IF... Have half of the group stand on one side of the room and half on the other. Choose one person to begin as the facilitator. This person can either remain the facilitator, or another can be substituted* with each move. The facilitator will start by saying "Move if..." and finish his/her sentence by adding a creative and revealing statement. (Example: "Move if you were born in Texas.") Those of the group who were born in Texas would then move from one side of the room to the other. (Some may move and some may not, depending on the question.) If the same person remains the facilitator, there is no hurry involved, but you could add the option* to change facilitators to the last person to cross the room after each move. The game continues with that person's "Move if..." statement, and so on. This game can be as brief or as long as you desire.

NONVERBAL BIRTHDAY LINE-UP The facilitator asks everyone to line up according to their month and date of birth without any talking. This should

inspire some interesting means of communication towards a common goal.

TWO TRUTHS AND A LIE. Break your Home Group into groups of 4-6 and give them permission to lie in front of their group! One at a time, have each person in the group tell in random order two non-boring facts and one interesting lie about themselves. (Example-Boring: "I got my driver's license when I was 16". Example-Interesting: "I got my driver's license when I was 16 while having two broken limbs to contend with!") Before coming up with their three statements, have members consider who is in their group that might have inside information about them. Remind the group members not to spoil it for the rest if they know the answer. Once someone has told their two truths and a lie, go person by person in the group and have everyone "vote" on what the lie might be. Continue the game until everyone has had a turn to share their two truths and a lie, and the voting is complete.

MY IDEAL VACATION. Give each person in your group an opportunity to share their response to the following statement: My ideal vacation would be.....

HOLLYWOOD EXTRA. Ask your group members the following: If you could be an extra in any Hollywood movie, which movie would you choose and why?



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