

## Icebreaker: Names of Jesus

Who has Jesus been to you this week?

*Tami Rudkin* | posted 8/12/1999

Write the following names of Jesus on index cards—one name per card. Put them in the middle of the floor or table where everyone is seated. Have each person decide who Jesus has been to them this past week. Have them pick that card and share why they chose that one particular name.

Wonderful Counselor	Friend	Savior
Bread of Life	Lamb of God	Redeemer
Master	Bridegroom	Gate
Shepherd	Way, Truth, Life	Teacher
King of Kings	Light of the World	Advocate
Prince of Peace	Alpha and Omega	Emmanuel
Bright Morning Star	Lord of the Sabbath	Vine

## A Warm Welcome

A way to welcome newcomers into your community and show God's love.

*Sue Skalicky* | posted 7/09/2002

As I answered the door at our new home last year I was pleasantly surprised to see an older woman bearing a beautiful basket. This friendly woman, although she was a paid Welcome Wagon employee, was acting like the long-ago neighbor who would greet new families with a loaf of banana bread and a sincere smile.

Thomas Briggs, an ad man in Memphis, Tenn., started the Welcome Wagon in the summer of 1928. He reasoned that sending personal greetings to new neighbors was the friendly thing to do and if the greeting came with a few gifts from local companies, it could provide a good source of business for his clients. Since its founding, this service has helped more than 25 million families settle into communities throughout the U.S.

However, several years ago the Welcome Wagon has to drastically reduce its staff of friendly faces and for the most part the service has become an impersonal collection of coupons without the warm welcome. On Sunday, October 18, 1998 Laura Pulfer, writer

for The Cincinnati Enquirer wrote, "Now that the paid 'neighbor ladies' have been fired, solicitations will come by mail, dropped off while we are at work. We will not have to make coffee or chitchat with the person who delivers them. It is unlikely that any unpaid neighbor ladies (or gentlemen) will pick up the slack." Pulfer's last statement hit me hard. Although the wagon part continues does the welcome have to be history? Do we care about our neighbor only in theory? Do we spend more of our time looking into the faces of our computers than we do into the faces of our neighbors?

During this month, have your group members kept their eyes out for any in-coming moving vans in their neighborhood. After new neighbors have been identified ask the member that lives in that neighborhood to find out if the new family has any children or pets. Then, as a group, put together a basket filled with items that would be appropriate for that family. Start with a phonebook (usually available for free at local grocery stores) and a city map and flyers about local attractions, libraries, and colleges (these can be picked up for free at your local Chamber of Commerce). Add a list of phone numbers and addresses for local schools, veterinarians, video stores, plumbers, hospitals, your church, etc., depending on their unique needs. Then fill the rest of the basket with fun extras like homemade chocolate chip cookies, packages of microwave popcorn, and a couple of video rental coupons. Include a welcome card signed by all the members of your small group. Encourage the member that lives in that neighborhood to leave their name and address with the new family and continue to build a relationship with them. Have them personally invite them to attend your small group and church.

Make your group's welcome basket an on-going outreach project as other members alert the group of new families in their neighborhood.

## Prescriptions for a Healthy Group

Is your group at a health risk?

*Michael C. Mack* | posted 7/12/1996

You're getting fat. Too many Ho Ho's. Not enough exercise. You're sick and nearly anemic. If you don't do something soon, this may turn into something *really* serious. Don't take it personally—I'm talking about your group ... well, many groups anyway.

When it comes to good health, small groups are like people. We have to take care of the body or something can go wrong. Here are 7 tips to keep your group in great health.

**Eat balanced meals.** Your group needs a good balance of proteins (Bible study), starches (fellowship/support), vegetables (training and equipping), fruit (of the Spirit, that is—ministry to others and outreach). Too much of one category to the neglect of the rest can eventually cause sickness. Also, you can't live on fast food or junk food. A fast-food diet consists of five minutes of prayer and ten minutes of Bible study.

Fellowship is necessary in a group, but it should not crowd out the essentials. Junk food consists of "careless words" (Matthew 12:36), "meaningless words" (1 Timothy 1:6), "godless chatter" (2 Timothy 2:16), and all kinds of foolish talk (Proverbs 10:14, 19-21; Ecclesiastes 10:12-14; Ephesians 5:4). Those contain too much fat and not enough nutrients for a healthy body.

**Get your RDA of vitamins and minerals.** A healthy group gets its recommended daily allowance of Bible study and prayer. That means that for a group to continue to grow, the individual group members must practice these disciplines daily. As each person grows stronger in his or her relationship with God, the whole body is strengthened.

**Get plenty of exercise.** If all you do is eat, you'll eventually get so fat you can't get out of your chairs. A group that constantly eats is an inward-focused group. That focus feels good for a while, but it's an unhealthy habit in the long run. You've got to put the food you eat—especially those proteins—into action.

There are several types of exercises that will give your group a healthy, outward focus. One type is isometric. This includes activities you can do right in your chairs: worship and prayer. Isometric exercises are vertical in nature. The other type of exercise—serving others—is horizontal in nature.

One warning: Do not try to exercise without eating a good, balanced meal first. In other words, you need to have the meat of the Word and prayer, the nutrients that come from training and equipping, plus the support you get from fellowship before you can effectively minister to others.

**Get plenty of rest.** Even a healthy group needs to take a break once in a while to rest, rejuvenate, and refresh. A group that does not get enough rest will burn out. Rest is an essential function in a healthy body.

**Practice good hygiene.** A group that doesn't take care of itself begins to stink. Group hygiene—planning for the future, talking about problems, working on schedules, determining what the "rules" are—may seem like little things, but if things aren't taken care of on regular basis, the group is susceptible to all kinds of diseases.

**Get regular checkups.** How do you know if your small group is in good health? The same way you know if your own body is—monitor the symptoms. Regular checkups—that is, group evaluation—can help a group avoid problems later. When you conduct a group checkup, you examine all the parts of the body to be sure everything is in good health. You ask questions and allow members to talk about how they feel.