



## **Response & Responsibility**

Responding to challenges and caring for people requires wisdom and a clear understanding of responsibility. What is the church's responsibility? What is the responsibility of the individual? Look at the verses below to see how the wisdom of Scripture provides perspective.

**“Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way, you will fulfill the law of Christ. If anyone thinks they are something when they are not, they deceive themselves. Each one should test their own actions. Then they can take pride in themselves alone, without comparing themselves to someone else, for each one should carry their own load.”**

**Galatians 6:1-5 (New American Standard Bible)**

## **4 Questions**

These four questions provide perspective regarding responsibility for you and the person you are leading. These questions also provide perspective to help you, the individual and the church understand the nature of a challenge or need. Properly used all four questions set clear boundaries of responsibility. Over time as you use the questions you'll naturally weave them into your leadership care conversations.

### **Question #1: “How long have you been dealing with this?”**

***Provides perspective. Informs you of the duration or frequency of the issue.***

Follow-up question to dig deeper if needed: “When did this first occur? How often are you faced with this?”

### **Question #2: “Who else knows?”**

***Provides awareness. Tells you if this is the first time he or she has told anyone.***

Follow-up questions to dig deeper if needed: Do any other people know? If so, who? When was the last time you talked to someone? How did they respond? Have you talked to anyone else about this? If so, Who? If this is the first time they have told someone or it's a new issue, thank them for trusting you and for taking the step to talk about it with someone.

### **Question #3: “Have you received any advice or counsel regarding this?”**

***Provides context; and prevents conflicting advice or conflict of interest***

Follow-up questions to dig deeper if needed: What have those you've talked to said about this? Have you sought any other help or resources regarding this issue?

Note: Do not put yourself between an individual or couple and a licensed counselor. Remember you are only hearing one side of a conversation or situation.

### **Question #4: “Do you have any plans for your next step?”**

***Provides boundaries. Clarifies the responsibility boundary between Gal 6:2 and 6:5.***

Follow-up questions to dig deeper if needed: What do you think might be your next step? What resources do you think you need to take your next step?

Note: Be sure to clarify personal responsibility versus church (or group) responsibility: “You will need to make the actual calls, but I can help you get some suggested referrals.”



## **Responding to Challenges**

Remember, you will use the four questions to inform your response. Do not skip the process of getting perspective, context, awareness and setting boundaries that comes with walking through the four questions. Now that you know what the challenge is, below are the three possible ways you can respond.

### **The 3 Go's**

The three responses are options for who responds and who goes. There are three ways to respond to challenges in your group. These are based on the wisdom of Jesus from Matthew 18.

#### **1) You Go**

The group leader responds with counsel, advice or suggested step(s). You can take this step on your own or get coaching from the church.

#### **2) We Go**

In some cases, it may be best for both you and a church leader to respond together. For new leaders the response may need to be modeled by an experienced leader for development or training purposes. This may also be a second step for some situations. If after taking the matter on yourself a second person may be needed for support or to manage the challenge, and/or to respond with appropriate care.

#### **3) The Church Goes**

Based on the information and situation provided by the four questions, your church contact may determine it's best for a pastor or church leader to go. At this stage church leadership will take the responsibility for leading and responding.



## **8 Challenging Types**

There are various types of people who will attend a group. The list below is not exhaustive, but it is illustrative of some common challenging types you may face. If left unchallenged these will hijack your group.

<b>1) The Talker</b>	<b>2) The Critic</b>	<b>3) The EGR</b>	<b>4) Tangent Weaver</b>
<b>5) Late Comer</b>	<b>6) The Dominator</b>	<b>7) Silent Member</b>	<b>8) The Inhibitor</b>

Get your feet wet by stepping into the situation with these suggestions so that you know how to better shepherd the people God has entrusted to you.

### **1) The Talker**

**The Situation:** Someone is talking too much

Options for addressing “The Talker”

- Take this person aside and address the issue. Don’t wait for them to “get it” based on the felt awkwardness in the group. You will need to step in. Explain to them that when any one person dominates the discussion it doesn’t allow those who are more introverted to share in the discussion.
- Ask them to limit their input. Valuable as it may be, the group needs to share in the talking. Share that it is your role to manage any awkward silence and limiting their input helps you lead others to share.
- Remind them of the purpose of Fellowship Groups -leading people to life in Jesus. They can serve the group by giving others time to share and be known by limiting their talking.
- After you pose a question direct the response to someone else in the group and guide the follow-up discussion accordingly.

### **2) The Critic**

**The Situation:** You have a person who is critical of others in your group, the church; or has a critical spirit

Options for addressing “The Critic”

- Take this person aside and let them know their demeanor is hindering the purpose and ask them to carefully evaluate their spirit before group meetings to honor the purpose.
- Share with them the consequences of a critical spirit
- Help this person to see that this critical spirit hurts people and doesn’t make Fellowship Groups a safe and healthy place to grow and be known.



### 3) The EGR [Extra Grace Required]

**The Situation:** You have a person or couple that is always in need or requires more attention from the group

Options for addressing “The EGR”

- a) It is crucial to establish clear boundaries with the person as soon as possible. For example, when they phone you, immediately let them know you only have a few minutes to talk. After a few minutes gently let them know you appreciate the call, but you have to go now.
- b) Address the situation. Pull them aside after a group meeting and gently bring the situation to their attention with a suggestion to help them resolve it (setting aside a later time to walk through the 4 Questions).
- c) Understand that some issues such as any kind of abuse, alcoholism or drug addiction, depression or serious life issue (like divorce or separation) requires professional help. The church has a counselor to help, and a vetted list of qualified counselors in our community. Our counselors are also able to provide specialist referrals. Help that person make the contacts they need to get help (see 4 Questions).

### 4) The Tangent-Weaver

**The Situation:** Someone leads the conversation off track every week

Options for addressing “The Tangent-Weaver”

- a) Immediately following the person’s response redirect the group back to the original question by restating it.
- b) Have a private chat and bring the matter to their attention. Ask them to please stick with the subject or passage at hand when they respond.
- c) When the person’s response weaves another tangent direct them in the moment, even if you have to interrupt and cut them off.

### 5) The Late Comer

**The Situation:** Someone is consistently late to the group.

Options for addressing “The Late Comer”

- a) Address the person in private and ask what keeps them from being on time and how the group can help them be on time.
- b) If they have a legitimate reason make sure the group knows about it. This will protect the group’s morale and commitment.
- c) Ask the person not to come unless they can commit to be on time. They made a commitment like everyone else in the group. If they cannot hold that commitment offer to release them from it.



## 6) The Dominator

**The Situation:** Someone is dominating and exerting their brand of “leadership”

Options for addressing “The Dominator”

- a) Get to know the person. It could be the person is a natural leader who needs some coaching on how to balance leadership and people skills.
- b) Address the person in private. Let them know their style may come across as challenging to the group. Ask them to monitor themselves.
- c) Let them know you see leadership gifts and skills in them. Ask them if they would be willing to be a resident leader in your group so that in the future they could lead a group of their own. Don’t make promises just present the opportunity.

## 7) The Silent Member

**The Situation:** Someone has a hard time opening up or sharing

Options for addressing “The Silent Member”

**Note:** Just because someone doesn’t say something doesn’t mean they don’t have something to say.

- a) Take some time to talk with this person one-on-one. This helps build rapport with them.
- b) Call them between meetings and let them know you are glad they are in the group. Personally, invite them to share at the next group meeting.
- c) If they are still not comfortable, try breaking into smaller groups from time to time to help this person open and share.

## 8) The Inhibitor

**The Situation:** Someone keeps people from being vulnerable or sharing personal “below the line” details

Options for addressing “The Inhibitor”

- a) Set guidelines early on in your group life about how to respond: No Cross Talk -do not use your personal sharing time to counter or challenge what someone else has already shared; Cliché Free Zone -encourage members not to summarize someone’s story with shallow clichés or pithy statements; Embrace the Silence -let your group know that being silent and providing sacred space after someone has been vulnerable honors the person and their pain or openness.
- b) Have a private chat and bring the matter to their attention. If they feel the need to say something, direct them to simply thank the person for sharing and not to say more.
- c) Speak privately with the inhibitor outside of group time and ask them why they feel the need to prevent others from being vulnerable. Use the four questions to probe why they struggle with people sharing their emotions, hurts or pains in a group setting.