

# SURPRISE, SURPRISE! IT'S WHAT YOUR GROUP MEMBERS NEED

*By Ken Braddy*

If variety is truly the spice of life, a lot of small-group Bible studies are pretty bland. Whether on a church campus or in a home, group leaders tend to revert back to easy (and predictable) methods. It's time to spice things up a bit and become less predictable.

Hebrews 1:1 tells us that God communicated with man "in different times and in different ways." Some of those ways proved to be surprising to the person or audience. Think about Moses suddenly hearing God's voice through a burning bush or the surprise when Balaam's donkey spoke! Shepherds were surprised to hear angels singing and proclaiming the birth of the Savior, and who could have predicted that a hand would appear and write on the wall during a banquet?

As a group leader, you can copy this aspect of God's communication style. Your group Bible study members won't mind a bit if you change things up, do something delightfully different, and keep them wondering what you've got up your sleeve.

- 1. SURPRISE THEM BY CHANGING THE ORDER OF THINGS.** Most groups have an identifiable pattern when they meet. Change the order in which you fellowship, pray, worship, and study. You can begin by jumping into the Bible study and end with a time of fellowship. Save announcements until the end of the session or simply hand out a sheet of paper on which you've listed the announcements.
- 2. SURPRISE THEM BY LEADING IN A DIFFERENT WAY.**
  - If you tend to be a discussion-oriented group, intentionally deliver a mini-lecture.
  - If you tend to speak a lot as the group leader, introduce some visual aids or object lessons to help your visual learners connect with the lesson.
  - Break the group into smaller groups.
  - Watch a video clip.
  - Use a musical element in the session. Play a song from your phone, iPad®, or other device and instruct group members to read the lyrics while the song is being played.

The goal is to get out of your rut and appeal to the different learning styles of your group members. You'll be surprised how much people will appreciate a little variety in the way you lead them through a Bible study.

- 3. SURPRISE THEM BY CHANGING YOUR GROUP'S LOCATION.** If you are an on-campus Sunday School group, meet off-campus, in a different classroom, or just go outside. If you are a home group, meet in a place where you've never held a Bible study, like a coffee house, an office, or the backyard of a friend the group doesn't know. A change of venue can excite your group members and build anticipation for your Bible study session.

A small surprise can help you capture the interest of your group members, redirect their focus, and help you teach God's Word more effectively. Don't be predictable ... be surprising. It's time to spice things up!