



The
JESUS
experiment

Church Countdown Flow Chart

How to prepare for a church-wide campaign

Countdown Overview

10-12 weeks out: Preparation

8-9 weeks out: Promotion and Administration

6-7 weeks out: Recruiting Members to Join Groups

5 weeks out: Training Leaders

2-4 weeks out: Assimilation of Data Book Distribution

1-2 weeks out: Leader Readiness

Launch the Jesus Experiment

1-2 weeks before the end: Sustaining New Leaders/Groups

10-12 weeks before launch

PREPARATION

Prepare Promotional Materials: All promotional materials can be found at the jesusexperiment.com website under Resources.

- **Banners** - A PDF is available that can be sent to a local sign company.
- **Mini-posters** - Download the graphic files for either 8x11 or 11x17.
- **DVD** – Downloadable and reproducible.
- **Bulletin inserts (same as a marketing flyer)**
- **Invitations**
- **Registration Cards**

Order Sample books: Get an early shipment of books to have on display with bulletin inserts.

Select a campaign Coordinator. This person will be responsible for handling all of the administrative detail of the campaign.

Play Promotional Video: Run the short video on your media screens.

- Set goals for participation levels. For example, set a goal for participation from 50% of regular attendees. Of those people, 100% of the groups will still be participating by week 6. Remember, about 10% of the people who sign up to lead a group won't launch their group.
- Share the vision for everyone to try the "Jesus Experiment" beginning on (select the start date).

PLAN ENROLLMENT PROMOTION

Bulletin Inserts. Add your dates and other information to the insert template.

Registration Card. Add any local information to the template.

Invitations. Use the template to create an invitation card that people can use with friends.

On-line sign up forms: For maximum exposure, post a sign-up form on your website.

Have the forms open so registrants can fill them out online. Once completed, have the form routed via e-mail back to the person coordinating this campaign. Make sure an e-mail response is automatically generated telling people their registration was received. Save yourself incoming phone calls and headaches.

PLAN EVENTS

Plan Group Leader Training Session:

- This is where group leaders will receive the following:
 - Coaching Tips for Group Leaders (available on the website)
 - Host Home Covenant (available on the website)
 - Leaders Guide (available on the website)
 - A copy of *The Jesus Experiment* (We suggest you provide leaders with a free copy.)
 - A copy of the Group Roster
 - Orientation and equipping resources for new group leaders. Excellent training resources are available for new leaders at smallgroups.com or willowcreek.com/grouplife. You may want to arrange a special meeting for new leaders.

Plan Leader Thank You Event:

- Begin thinking about a way to provide thanks and celebrate the success of the campaign with your group leaders. Design invitations for this event encouraging leaders to “Bring a Friend”.

At this point, make sure all flyers are printed, the trainings are scheduled, the training materials are being created, and pertinent materials are being ordered.

8-9 weeks before launch

PROMOTION AND ADMINISTRATION

- Announce *The Jesus Experiment* from the pulpit and declare the need for leaders of home groups to do the *The Jesus Experiment*.
- Examine your existing small group database. Contact all existing groups by e-mail and phone to ensure they're onboard for *The Jesus Experiment*. Compile the following information:
 - Group leader name
 - Type of group (couples, couples w/kids, singles, men's, women's, mixed, etc.)
 - Location where they'll meet
 - Day and time

- Recruit new small group leaders and members. Display promotional materials and keep a visible and busy presence in the narthex/public area.
- Place inserts in bulletin and have registration cards available at tables in the narthex/public area.
- Have church staff or volunteers available to explain in greater detail what leaders will do and register leaders who are interested.
- Begin to recruit volunteers to handle the materials distribution that will occur 2-3 weeks before the campaign starts.

COLLECTION OF DATA & FINAL RECRUITMENT OF HOST HOMES

- Place inserts in bulletin and set some at tables in the narthex/public area.
- Initiate final challenge from pulpit, calling for host homes and leaders of small groups.
 - Ask them to take time *right then* to fill out the Registration Card.
 - As the newly signed-up leaders exit the church, have them turn in their completed Registration Card at the tables.
- Add new small group leaders to database.
- E-mail new small group leaders and inform them that they have been accepted as new leaders.
 - In this e-mail make the new leaders aware of a mandatory Group Leader Training.
 - Explain the commitment timeline for the leadership commitment.

Verify that the leader knows it is every week for 12 weeks straight. Send a reminder e-mail showing them the information they told you, including leader's name, type of group, location and date/time.

6-7 weeks before launch

RECRUITING MEMBERS TO JOIN GROUPS

At this time the focus is no longer on recruiting leaders and host homes, but people to attend the small groups. Of course, some new leaders and host homes may appear, but the focus is getting as many people as possible to attend the groups.

- Place inserts and registration cards in bulletin and set some at tables in the church lobby area.
- Initiate challenge from pulpit- calling for small group participants.
 - Ask them to take time right then to complete the registration card.
 - As the newly signed-up small group participants exit the church, have them place their completed registration cards in a basket.
- Add new small group participants to a database.
 - Input contact information
 - Input specific type of group desired by each registrant. (Singles, married, married with children, etc.)

5 weeks before launch

TRAINING LEADERS

- Hold the Group Leaders Training on a variety of days in order to give potential leaders the opportunity to understand how *The Jesus Experiment* group will work.

- Give leaders at the training:
 - A copy of *The Jesus Experiment* book
 - Leadership packet including:
 - Coaching Tips for Group Leaders
 - Host Home Covenant
 - Group Roster
 - Leaders Guide
- At this training work through the Leaders Guide, in order for everyone to feel adequately prepared to lead their group.
 - Have the leader of the training run the session as if he/she were the leader of this small group. Tips should be provided to the participants as the session is facilitated.
 - While working through the Introduction and Week 1 in the book, allow everyone time to process their answers and wait for them to volunteer to speak. Be patient.
 - It may help at first if the leader of the training offers to share a short answer that applies to his/her life and then explain that they should do the same as the leader of their group.
 - Not all questions in the questions *have* to be covered. If possible, please select the ones you think apply best for your group before the meeting begins.
 - Have everyone keep a Bible handy because the scripture references are listed, but the actual scripture may not. Before the meeting, it would be good for the leader to mark, tab, or sticky note the pages for quick access to read the scripture out loud.
 - Remind leaders that if they need help they can e-mail/call or be in touch about anything. Make it clear who they can come to for support.

TYPICAL MEETING FORMAT

- Welcome all guests
- Provide drinks and cups (snacks if possible, perhaps a potluck).
- Additional pens & paper are helpful
- Give everyone up to 15 additional minutes to arrive, get settled and begin.
- Start with an opening prayer asking for the group to grow spiritually and for God to enable each of us to live the Jesus Experiment in a way that would provide a real-time connection with Christ.
- Take time to share stories and reports of personal successes with *The Experiment*.
- Guide everyone to the chapter of the book.
- Ask a member to read the introduction out loud. This helps prepare the group for the study.
- Group discussion.
- As time draws to a close, ask for prayer requests and write them down. Be sure to give praise if you have it; model for them that anything is praiseworthy.
- Either lead a closing prayer or ask an attendee to try to encompass the prayer requests everyone just heard.

2-4 weeks before launch

ASSIMILATION OF DATA

- Have all groups in place.
 - Insert members into groups according to group type, location, marital status and age.
 - Ideal Group Size: 10 to 14 people
- Make outbound phone calls from staff and volunteers to the group leaders.
 - This is a great way to get everyone on message. If anything you've advised them has been unclear, this is where you will learn it. Though it's tedious, take the time to call every leader.

- The personal connection really matters here. Phone call, e-mail, and follow up however you can to ensure people are placed correctly. Be sure you are staffed appropriately. This can take as many as 6 people (including volunteers) working to get connections done and communicated.

BOOK DISTRIBUTION:

How to organize:

- Choose a room or atrium that allows you to set up one or more separate stations. At each wall, have plenty of books on hand.
- Brief your volunteers on how the distribution will take place and other logistics.
- Prepare for payment methods. If possible, make provision for payment by credit card.

In large churches books may come on pallets with literally hundreds of boxes. In order to place the resources in each station, you're going to need the following before distribution starts:

- locations to store the pallets
- box cutters
- strong volunteers

Make it easier on volunteers by only taking checks, not cash. Ensure the Internet connections for credit card transactions work before you let people in line. Attempt to run a sample transaction. You could use a blank credit card form that the buyer fills out and someone later enters the data online.

1-2 weeks before launch

LEADER READINESS

- **Remind Leaders to Send Reminders**
 - All group leaders need reminder and encouragement emails that they should have everything ready to go for the first meeting. Ensure that they have rosters with contact information completed.
- **Require Leaders to call all members.**
 - This is the opportunity for them to connect before the first meeting takes place, as well as verify date/time/location/baby-sitting decisions and key elements of meeting logistics. Information such as where to park or how to find directions should be given out at this call. The first talk between the leader and member can set the tone for how the group

dynamics work early on. During this call the members should be reminded to have their book and Bible with them at the meeting.

- Make sure that the participant knows that the leader is praying for them as they live *The Jesus Experiment*..

LAUNCH THE JESUS EXPERIMENT

Build up the momentum, MAKE IT FUN!

The more excitement, the better buzz there will be.

Look for, encourage and share the Experiment with life changing stories.

Be sure to tape or document testimonies.

Have the Senior Pastor share these with the congregation as the study is happening.

1-2 weeks before end

SUSTAINING NEW LEADERS/GROUPS

BEFORE THE STUDY ENDS:

- Have a plan for a next suggested study in order to maintain the momentum captured by the small groups. It's critical to have recommendations, as this is where many groups struggle. Erwin McManus, Chip Ingram, Andy Stanley, Kerry Shook and others have excellent studies.
- Have Leader thank you event or celebration. Two weeks before the study ends, celebrate, share stories, and prayer requests. Make this an opportunity to thank everyone who stepped up to be a Host Home Leader. But also make this encouraging, a pep rally, with prayers for the continued success of their groups and praise for making it through. Be sure the invitation for this event encourages leaders to "bring a friend". Make sure all friends or non-leaders sign in and leave their contact information.

ⁱ Countdown chart adapted from www.onemonthlive.com