

Ideas for start-up

- *Beautiful babies* by Priscilla Luming. Make “baseball cards” out of baby pictures of people in your small group. Each person writes important facts on them like birthplace, your full name, the name if you would have been born the opposite sex. Enjoy passing them around to one another.
- *Best friend* by Tom Sirinides. Ask each person to describe their best friend. (A variation is for them to describe their favorite family member.)
- *Community craps* by Shawn Young, Nev. Bring a pair of dice and take turns rolling. According to the numbers you roll, do or answer the following:
 2. What movie/TV character are you most like?
 3. The person three places to the left may ask you two questions.
 4. What do people of the opposite sex like about you?
 5. Who has been the biggest influence on you?
 6. Ask a question of anyone you choose.
 7. What was the best moment of your life?
 8. What three words would you use to describe God?
 9. Sing at least nine words of your favorite song.
 10. Finish this sentence: “I hate it when ...”
 11. Of all the people in the room, who do you have the *least* in common with? Treat that person to lunch this week. (Make an appointment with them before you leave today.)
 12. Do all the stupid-human tricks you know.
- *Dreaming* by Stephanie Moser, Kans. If there were no limits put on time, talent or training, no obstacles in the way, what would you do for God?
- *Do you believe?* by University of Illinois staff. Give everyone ten pennies (or M&Ms). Let each person have a chance to say something he/she has done that he/she doesn't believe anyone else has done. Everyone who has done it must give that person a penny. The game continues until someone runs out of pennies.
- *Fill in the blank (sort of)* by Scott Hotaling, Ill. Everyone thinks of a way to fill in the sentence: “I used to _____, but now I just _____.” Then, one person begins and completes the first half of the sentence, and the next person completes the second half in the way he or she had planned. The second person then says the first part of the sentence and the third person finishes it. This continues until each person contributes.
- *The friendship factor* by Nairy Ohanian, Mass. This activity explores attributes of friendships and helps members share their history of friends. Leaders bring white paper and crayons. Take a few minutes to have each member draw a picture of their closest friend back home. This does not need to be artistic, just have fun. Include features that are unique to him or her. Then write two characteristics you appreciate most about this friend. Discuss the pictures and the characteristics of good friendships. Notice the traits that members really desire in friends and work at nurturing those qualities in the group.
- *Guess who?* by Tom Sirinides. Everyone writes a sentence about themselves, then crumples their paper up and throws it into the middle of the circle. Each person then picks one up. One person opens his or hers and reads it. The group then tries to decide whose it might be. Even the person whose it actually is can participate in the discussion—don't lie, but don't give yourself away either. Continue one by one until all the papers are opened. An added challenge is that no one reveals the true answers until all have been opened and assigned. The group may want to change some previous guesses as the new papers are opened up.
- *Heroes* by Tom Sirinides. Ask, “Who was your hero as a child?” Or “Who was your favorite TV character as a child?” Or ask about favorite cartoon characters.
- *“I didn't know that”* by Dave Ivaska, Ill. Tell the group something about yourself that they'd never think to ask you about.
- *I've never* by Tom Sirinides. Give each person ten beans (or ten pennies, or just have them hold up their ten fingers!). The first player makes a statement like “I've never seen the ocean” or “I've never left this country.” (It *must* be a true statement.) Any player who *has* done that thing (that is, seen the ocean, left the country) loses one bean or penny or puts down one finger. Continue around the circle until only one person has any beans, pennies or raised fingers left.

■ *Impact* by Tom Sirinides. Ask each person to tell about someone who has had a significant impact on his or her life (for good, for bad, in whatever area they choose).

■ *Just save one* by Tom Sirinides. Pass around a bowl of colored candies (M&Ms, Reeses' Pieces, Skittles). Tell people to eat as many as they want, but to save *one* piece. After everyone has only one piece, announce a "question to answer" for each color. For example:

red—A happy day in your life

green—Someplace you'd like to visit and why

yellow—Someone you'd like to meet and why

orange—Three traits you'd like in a spouse

brown—A movie you enjoyed and why

■ *Let's celebrate!* by Nairy Ohanian. This activity allows internationals to reconnect with home and exposes group members to each other's cultural traditions. Each person should describe their favorite spiritual or cultural holiday, its purpose, how it is celebrated, how your family celebrates it, and why it is your favorite. Try to connect each holiday to your country's holiday or tradition. Allow members to ask questions of each other.

■ *More than a word* by Tom Sirinides. Each person answers the question "When, if ever, did God become more than a word to you?"

■ *My life's a pipe cleaner* by Tom Sirinides. Hand out pipe cleaners. Each person bends theirs to tell something about their break, or their week, or how they are feeling right now. (Think up your own ideas.)

■ *One day* by Tom Sirinides. Each person answers the question "If you could relive one day of your life, which day would it be?" Or "If you could have one day off unexpectedly, how would you spend it?"

■ *Picture this* by Tiffany Stack, Tenn. Cut out a variety of pictures from old magazines, catalogs or newspapers. Lay them in the center of the group, and ask group members to choose three pictures which they can use to describe themselves. Then have people tell the group how the pictures describe them.

■ *Pockets* by Tom Sirinides. Each person shows the group (and talks about) three things from his or her pockets, wallet, backpack or purse that tell something about him or her.

■ *Proverbs* by Tom Sirinides. Have everyone share a proverb from his or her home country. (This one works best with internationals.)

■ *Squares* by Priscilla Luming. Pass a roll of toilet paper around the group and tell each member to take as much toilet paper "as they think they need." For each square of paper they take, they must tell a joke, embarrassing moment or strange habit.

■ *Three words* by Tom Sirinides. Each person answers one or more of the following questions: If you had to describe yourself in three words, what would they be? If you had to describe your family in three words, what would they be? If you had to describe God in three words, what would they be? If you had to describe your childhood in three words, what would they be?

■ *Unique M&M game* by Amy Brooke. Everyone in the group takes one M&M for each person in their group (including themselves). They then each take a turn describing something they feel is unique about them. (Example: "I am a twin." "I've gone rock climbing.") If someone else in the group shares that experience or characteristic, both (or more) eat one M&M. This continues until people begin to run out of candy. This activity brings to light interesting and memorable information and helps people remember each other.

■ *What's in a name?* by Tom Sirinides. Tell your full name (including middle name or Asian name) and as much as you know about it: what it means, why you were given it and so on.

■ *Zoo* by Tom Sirinides. Each person answers: What animal are you most similar to? Why?¹

¹Bunch, C. (1996). *Small group idea book : Resources to enrich community, worship, prayer, nurture, outreach*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press.