

SHOULD MY SMALL GROUP BE OPEN OR CLOSED?

This is a common question in Small Group Ministry; "Is your small group open or closed?" Most small groups think this question is asking, "Will you welcome new people in your group?" At Saddleback, we want everyone to be interested in reaching and connecting people. But, how they connect people in small groups can happen in different ways. So, all of our small groups are "open" philosophically, but the way each group adds people to their small group can be very different. Here are a few examples:

1. Listed as an open group in our database because they want to add new members – but personal evangelism never stops.
2. Listed as a closed group but they are willing to add people from personal contacts – and personal evangelism never stops.
3. Listed as a closed group due to group dynamics, so adding new people is not appropriate at this time – but personal evangelism never stops.
4. Listed as a closed group, but once there is a natural break in the group dynamics the group will welcome new people again – but personal evangelism never stops.

For Saddleback, the term "open" and "closed" is mainly for group connections made through referrals.

We trust groups to know when to add new people and when dynamics aren't the best. We try to instill three things in groups: First, personal evangelism never stops whether the group is open or closed. Secondly, it is always easier and safer to not reach out, but at campaigns we will all be risk takers. And lastly, we know there will always be a tension between Fellowship and Evangelism. Acknowledge it. Then make friends with new people at small group socials, so when they are added to your group, culture shock is minimal to the group.